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*Short Histories of the Literatures  
of the World*

*Edited by Edmund Gosse*

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# A HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

1607-1865

BY

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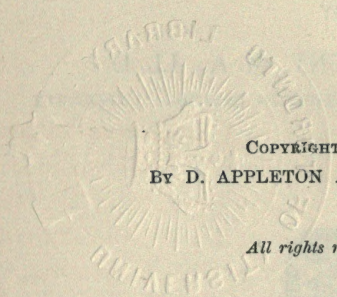


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TO PROPERTY OF  
AMERICAN LITERATURE  
1867-1868



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## PREFACE

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WHILE this volume has been prepared in the main along the lines laid down by its predecessors in the series to which it belongs, it differs from most of them in at least one important particular. A somewhat enlarged scale of treatment has been employed. This was necessitated by the facts that American literature, so far as concerns not merely the outside world, but the American people themselves, is a creation of the nineteenth century, and that it was impossible to deal satisfactorily with living writers; in other words, with the work of one generation out of three. To have treated so callow a literature on the scale adopted by the writers of the volumes dealing with the mature and extensive literatures of France and England would have meant the writing of an essay, not of a book.

The adoption of a somewhat magnified scale would seem, however, to be attended by two advantages. Owing in great part to democratic conditions the number of fairly important as opposed to comparatively eminent writers has been very large in America. A history of literature constructed on normal lines must omit this

rank and file of authors, and thus fail to set in relief a characteristic feature of new-world culture. Again, a magnified scale applied to American literature makes it possible to deal with the worthy pioneer authors of the Colonial and Revolutionary Periods as though they were reputable and fairly interesting men, not as though they were unrepresentable progenitors always to be kept in the background.

Actuated by the considerations just set forth, I have endeavoured to cover in a reasonable space and with critical standards the early periods of American literature which have been presented with such scholarly fulness in the four volumes of the late Prof. Moses Coit Tyler. For the period from 1783 to 1829, which no Tyler has made his own, I have tried to adopt the same scale and mode of treatment. For the period from 1830 to 1865 I have acknowledged to myself, and the reader will soon convince himself, that it is impossible to treat otherwise than tentatively and to a certain extent in impressionist fashion authors who have seemed almost a part of our own generation. Holmes and Lowell are no fitter subjects for the historian and critic as opposed to the appreciator than Tennyson and Browning are. Yet, as every one knows, the task of assigning the British poets their relatively proper places in their country's literature is one that must in the main be left to later generations. Nearly half the present volume, then, is not and cannot be a history of literature in the strictest sense of the term. I must, of course, ask the reader's kind indulgence for the whole undertaking, as any man must do who tries to compress into a volume the story

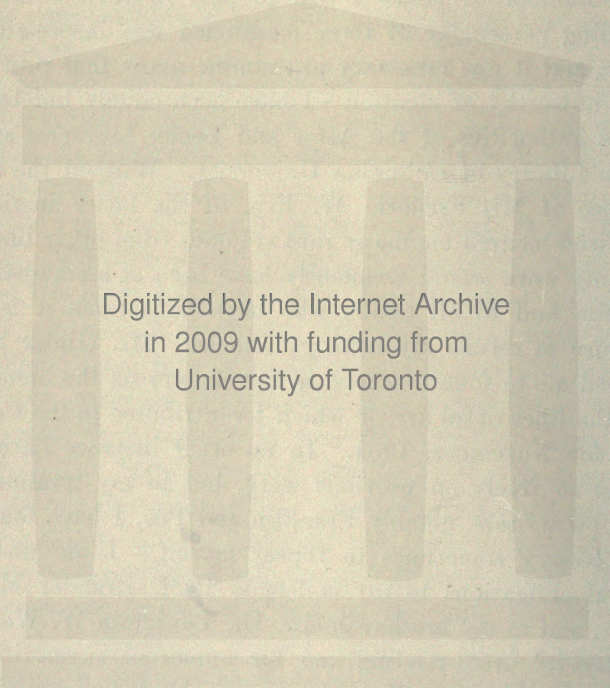


of even a young nation's literary achievements; but I must ask his special indulgence for those pages dealing with writers who but the other day were receiving in the flesh our love and praise.

For the privilege of reading and examining the very large number of books I had to pass in review—only a trifling percentage of those mentioned was inaccessible to me, and it was necessary to examine many that proved to be unworthy of mention—I have been chiefly indebted to the authorities of the Astor and Lenox Libraries and of the Library of Columbia University. Without the assistance of Mr. Frederic W. Erb, of the latter institution, who secured me many rare volumes from other libraries, my work would frequently have been at a standstill. To him and to all others who have helped me it is a pleasure to return my heartiest thanks. Mr. Gilder has allowed me to follow closely, in my chapter on the humorists, the lines of an article which I contributed to the *Century* for November, 1901. In no other instance have I drawn so freely on previous work, but in my treatment of a few writers, notably Franklin and Poe, I have found it necessary sometimes to repeat myself. I am under special obligations to my colleague Prof. Brander Matthews, and to my brother-in-law, Dr. Benjamin W. Wells, for careful proof-reading and for numerous suggestions. It is needless to say that Mr. Gosse's kindly supervision has been of the greatest value to me.

W. P. TRENT.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, *February 21, 1903.*



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# A HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

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## PART I

### THE COLONIAL PERIOD (1607-1764)

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#### CHAPTER I

##### THE EARLY COLONISTS

IT is a moot question whether at the beginning of an acquaintance it is more desirable to be seen at one's best with all the consequences of ensuing lapses from that standard, or to be seen at one's worst with all the advantages of subsequent rise in favour. American literature and its historian have, however, no choice in the matter, for both are doomed to make the acquaintance of the reader, if not precisely at their worst, at least without the opportunity, in homely parlance, to put their best foot foremost. It would be hard to imagine a more hopeless literature, from the point of view of intrinsic æsthetic value, or, in other words, a literature less rich in striking works of imagination and fancy, than the body of writings produced in the American colonies before the Revolution. Perhaps English literature between 1050 and 1200 A. D. might prove a formidable rival for the crown of poppy leaves, but we can afford to devolve upon learned specialists the congenial task of awarding it. It is sufficient for us to know and regret that one of the many points of difference

the literatures of Greece and America present to the student is to be found in the fact that in the case of the former he is introduced almost at once to Homer; in the case of the latter to the *Bay Psalm Book*.

But, while the historian of literature is required, on penalty of becoming one-sided or dryasdust, to keep always before his mind the standard of intrinsic æsthetic value, he is equally under obligation to extract from his theme whatever of scientific interest is implicit therein. The literature of the American colonies may not be able to bear the beauty-truth test given in the famous lines of Keats, but there is a subsequent literature likewise American that bears it well and is in consequence worthy of study. Yet in an era of evolutionary philosophy it would be idle to study any manifestation of the spirit of nature or of man apart from its origin and its growth. The literature, therefore, that is represented in prose by the names of Cooper and Hawthorne, in poetry by the names of Longfellow and Whittier, and in both by the names of Emerson, Lowell, and Poe, must be studied in the light, or if one will, the darkness, of the no-literature that is represented by the far from cosmopolitan names of Mrs. Bradstreet, Michael Wigglesworth, and Cotton Mather.

In dealing with the history of American colonial literature, or, in the main, the general history of the colonies, the student must keep his eyes steadily fixed upon two centres of influence, Virginia and Massachusetts, although Pennsylvania becomes important after the removal of Franklin to Philadelphia. From these two centres two diverse kinds of influence have radiated, to which we are wont to give the names of "Cavalier" and "Puritan."



While much loose thinking has been done under cover of these terms, they are, nevertheless, too serviceable to be contemptuously cast aside. It is still fairly correct to speak of the settlers of Virginia as "Cavaliers," although they were not universally of distinguished birth and although they possessed many distinctively Puritan traits. It is also fairly correct to speak of the settlers of Massachusetts as Puritans, although they were as well descended as the Virginians and were often as fully imbued with pride of family and caste as the traditional Cavalier. Speaking roughly, Virginia may be regarded as an extension of county England with its Cavalier qualities, and Massachusetts as an extension, or rather a culmination, of borough England with its Puritan qualities; and the two colonies may, for our purposes, be taken as typical of the other Southern and New England plantations. It follows that the student of their literature must constantly hark back to the divided England of the seventeenth century—to the England of Herrick, Cleveland, and Lovelace, of Milton, Bunyan, and Baxter.

This last feat is not difficult of accomplishment when we find ourselves confronted, on opening any volume relating to American literature, with the name, if not with the portrait, of that burly survival of knight-errantry Captain John Smith. This stalwart worthy, who has not lost his interest or importance through a modern detraction that seems somewhat to have overshot its mark, cannot fail to draw our thoughts to Jacobean England, for the simple reason that he never ceased to be an Englishman for all his escapades, real or fictitious, in foreign lands. Influential as he was in the planting of the first permanent

English colony on American soil (Jamestown, 1607), he never forfeited for an instant his birthright, and he remains from every logical point of view a British rather than an American writer. There are, perhaps, two reasons why historians of American literature claim him for their pages: one, the paucity of readable colonial books and writers; the other, the comparative indifference of British scholars to his quaint, crude, and interesting compilations. It is logic rather than indifference that makes one feel that critics and students of American literature have no right to deal at length either with him or with such early adventurers as George Percy, William Strachey, and George Sandys. The student of American literature cannot, of course, be indifferent to the fact that a Percy—"out of Northumberland"—is a good name to conjure with; or that Strachey's description of a famous storm may possibly have influenced Shakespeare in writing *The Tempest*. He must certainly confess his delight at the fact that George Sandys was enabled to work away at his translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in spite of the discomforts of his temporary colonial abode on the banks of the James; he must also be glad that the exiled poet was so highly connected and that his friendly adviser, Michael Drayton, was no defamer of Virginia. These facts are all interesting, but belong to the American historian only as they are borrowed from the historian of British literature. An independent student of American literature will pass them by with a mere glance, and will deal chiefly, if not entirely, with authors and books peculiar to the soil.

But it is always easier to talk of independence than actually to attain it. We can dismiss without much loss



the seventeenth-century Englishmen who came as adventurers to America, but sooner or later returned to live and die in the mother-country. We cannot dismiss so easily those immaterial immigrants known as influences—such as manners, customs, traditions, and beliefs—that came in with the first settlers and made America what it continues to be, an extension, a prolongation of Europe. Some Europeans may be inclined to disown their progeny, some Americans to forget their parentage, but the fact remains that the new world since the landing of Columbus has not been and cannot be independent of the old.

Now this declaration of dependence, like all honest declarations, is attended by distinct advantages. It frees us, for example, from the necessity of devoting tedious pages to a description of the colonists of the seventeenth century, and to an abridgment of their comparatively uninspiring annals. As we have seen, they represented in the main two somewhat sharp divisions of the population of England at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Later they were re-enforced by small bodies of Dutch, Swedes, Huguenots, and Germans, and, in the next century, by some Highlanders, and by considerable numbers of Scotch-Irishmen. Virginia, too, was for a time made a dumping-ground for jail-birds and other bad characters, and all the colonies received accessions of negro slaves; but none of these strains of population had literary aspirations or indeed affected markedly the Puritan characteristics of New England or the Cavalier characteristics of Virginia and her neighbours. In the middle region of New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, a type of population standing midway between

the two extremes was developed; but, where all was primitive, differences in manners, customs, and beliefs did not amount to much, and even Pennsylvania's contributions to literature were not important until all the colonies were being united by the first thrills of the national spirit.

We have, then, to figure to ourselves adventurers, ne'er-do-wells, plain townsfolk and country folk, and, later, well-to-do English country gentlemen or their sons, pushing up the Virginian rivers, laying out broad plantations, and treating or fighting with the Indians, from whom they had acquired knowledge of the tobacco which was long to be the staple product of their industry. Their bravery, their lavish hospitality, their acquisition of the right of holding representative assemblies, their quarrels with their governors and with their neighbours of Maryland—in short, their uncourtly but genuinely aristocratic qualities—are precisely what such a stock in such an environment might have been expected to acquire. With no metropolis to furnish the needed contact of mind with mind, with material needs making large drains upon their energy, with the chase and other rural sports satisfying their rudimentary instincts for pleasure, and, above all, with no deep-seated artistic impulses and few inherited literary traditions and aspirations, it is no wonder that they produced little literature and developed little culture of importance—that the least of their grievances against their tyrannical but picturesque governor, Sir William Berkeley, was his repression of learning and the printing-press. Such men could rebel under Nathaniel Bacon for their rights (1676), but what history they made was bound to be lacking in perspective. While they drove out governors and Indians,



and planted tobacco, the Thirty Years' War was devastating Germany, Richelieu was making France the first power in Europe, and Mazarin and Louis XIV were continuing his work; Charles I was losing his throne, Cromwell was asserting England's power, and Charles II was squandering it; Milton was composing his sublime epic, great scholars were gathering and extending the results of the Renaissance, some noble artists were still painting immortal pictures, and modern science was being born. What wonder that even we who possess our vast land securely because those brave men and women did their share in subduing the wilderness, should, nevertheless, when the things of the mind are in question, instinctively turn our eyes to the Europe of Galileo, Molière, and Rembrandt!

Nor is the case much better when we turn our eyes northward from the green woods and broad waters of the yet virgin State to the bleak but picturesque coast of New England. The purposes of the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth in 1620, and of the pious country gentlemen and townspeople who, a decade later, followed Winthrop to Massachusetts Bay, were surely high and are worthy of eternal regard. Many of their leaders, such as Bradford, Winthrop, Captain Standish, and Roger Williams, possess qualities either inspiring or else quaint and attractive; but, when all is said, the annals of colonial New England also are sadly wanting in perspective. The refugees from the village of Scrooby and the Cambridge students who fled from the tyranny of Archbishop Laud were excellent founders of sturdy commonwealths; but their descendant James Russell Lowell was not far wrong when he wrote:

“The Past has not laid its venerable hands upon us

in consecration, conveying to us that mysterious influence whose force is in its continuity. We are to Europe as the Church of England to her of Rome. The latter old lady may be the scarlet woman, or the Beast with ten horns, if you will, but hers are all the heirlooms, hers that vast spiritual estate of tradition, nowhere yet everywhere, whose revenues are none the less fruitful for being levied on the imagination."

The imaginations of many persons, to whom it would not seem inappropriate to apply to the Church of Rome an even more unflattering and unbecoming term than "old lady," may suffice to raise the revenues here mentioned by Lowell; but the great world will never be able to interest itself in the Pequot and King Philip's Wars (1637 and 1675), in the struggles against the French and their savage allies, in the founding of towns and colonies or of Harvard College (1636), in the stubborn resistance of Massachusetts against would-be royal tyrants, or even in the persecution of the Salem witches. The sober aristocracy of clergymen and magistrates, the plain democracy of God-fearing farmers, thrifty merchants, hardy fishermen, and venturesome sailors have an interest for latter-day Americans, and once, at least, furnished a true literary artist with materials for a great book. But it must be remembered that the author of *The Scarlet Letter* is not even yet a writer of world-wide currency. And whatever Hawthorne may have done for them in a literary way, those Puritans of early New England did little or nothing for themselves, even though, unlike the Southern colonists, they derived from their rather numerous towns some of the advantages of social soli-



darity. They, like the colonists to the south of them, had no deep-seated artistic impulses and few inherited literary instincts and aspirations. Their instincts and aspirations were religious, and they gave them full vent in literature, if we may apply the word to their writings, as well as in life. But their religion was a narrow one, and its influences were in the main confined to the upbuilding of character. They eschewed ritual, painted no pictures full of holy charm, and gave the world a *Day of Doom* instead of a *Divine Comedy* or a *Paradise Lost*. They have reaped as they sowed, for the modern world ignores, when it does not scorn, men who are content to be unitarians worshipping goodness when they might possibly have been trinitarians worshipping truth and beauty as well.

## CHAPTER II

### VERSE WRITERS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

It has been often asked why Shakespeare's contemporaries who founded Jamestown and Milton's contemporaries who founded Boston and Providence did not produce a literature in some degree worthy of the admiration of posterity. The apologists of all things American lay great stress in reply upon the repressive effects of the mental absorption and the physical fatigue incident to felling trees, frustrating Indian attacks, planting tobacco, and sowing maize—in other words, upon the onerous duties and the numerous vicissitudes of the life of a settler in virgin territory. At first blush this answer seems plausible enough. Hewers of wood and drawers of water produce little literature in a self-conscious period. Yet it is by no means clear that the vicissitudes of the seventeenth century, or the rather monotonous material development of the first half of the eighteenth, robbed the American colonies of many imaginative writers. Such of the early adventurers as had poetical gifts exercised them, as we perceive when we discover George Sandys working away at his translation of the *Metamorphoses* amid the swamps of Jamestown. The clerical elegists of New England found an abundance of time to court the lugubrious muse, in spite of the length of their

sermons, and they had no lack of subjects. The truth seems to be that, as Sir Richard Jebb has observed, English poetry—which, for the seventeenth century at least and for the eighteenth so far as the Puritans are concerned, means far the larger part of imaginative literature—is the flower rather than the index of the popular character. But the portions of the English stock transplanted to the new world were precisely those portions least likely to flower into poetry. Leaving out the names of Milton and Baxter, of Bunyan, in his masterpieces, and a few other writers, we find that the great body of English Puritanism did little or nothing for English poetry in the seventeenth century and not a great deal for English prose. Indeed, it is possible to maintain that Puritanism in New England during this period reached a higher level of literary excellence, such as it was, than it did in England apart from the manifestation of two very great literary geniuses, and that if every emigrant to New England had remained in Old England the roll of the British poets probably would not have been lengthened materially. The decaying Puritanism of the eighteenth century, furthermore, gave New England no worse poetry than nonconformity gave Old England during the same dismal epoch. There are depths of bathos in Dr. Watts that could only with great difficulty be paralleled in any poet divine of New England. Not even Nicholas Noyes himself could say of any of the subjects of his marvellous elegies what Dr. Watts said of Thomas Gunston, Esquire:

Gentle Ithuriel led him round the skies;  
The buildings struck him with immense surprise.



The fact seems to be that New England poetry before Bryant was as bad as a contemporary observer, who was studying the simultaneous literary development of the English nonconformists, might have expected to find it. With regard to Virginian poetry still less need be said. While the Cavaliers of England did produce poets like Carew and Suckling, these were representative of the court rather than of their social class, and the governor's court at Jamestown was but a feeble copy of that of the Stuarts. The effects of social solidarity were almost entirely lost in a colony of huge plantations; nor need the memory of Somerville make us forget that the fox-hunting squire of England has done little for his country's literature. The roar of the cannon at Dunbar and Worcester was heard but faintly on the banks of the James and the Potomac, and Bacon's Rebellion, although it produced one good poem, was scarcely heroic enough to turn Virginia into a "nest of singing birds." But now, having discussed some of the reasons why America furnished no great poets to the literature of the race during the seventeenth century, let us pass to a consideration of such verse writers as she did produce.

Not unnaturally the first Virginian adventurers made the earliest use of their pens in describing their condition and in urging other adventurers to brave the perils of the seas. Most of these reports were in prose and shall have a word later, but at least one was in verse and was written by Richard Rich, who made the voyage to Virginia in the summer of 1609, then returned in 1610 to England, and afterward wished to see the new world once more. He styles himself in his preface to his *Newes*

from *Virginia* (1610) "a soldier, blunt and plaine," and says that he wrote in verse "only to feede his owne humour." Perhaps he hoped to get enough money from his poem to pay for his return passage. It was not, however, worth more than the broadside ballads then hawked about London and sold for a penny—indeed, it is to be feared that these were Rich's favourite literature, for they certainly dominated his style, as the following stanza will prove:

A discreet counsell he creates of men of worthy fame,  
That noble Gates leiftenant was the admirall had to name.  
The worthy Sir George Somers Knight, and others of command;  
Maister Georg Pearcy, which is brother unto Northumberland.

It is uncertain whether or not Rich returned to Virginia and there cultivated his muse and the tobacco plant; it is thus not clear that American literature may legitimately lay claim to him. There will be no disputing over him, to be sure, for he awakens no such covetous desires as does George Sandys, who, from 1621 to 1625, followed Drayton's advice and laboured to complete the translation of the *Metamorphoses* he had begun before leaving England. As an Indian massacre followed his arrival, and as even in more normal times his situation was not propitious to the cultivation of his scholarly tastes, a translation of Ovid's *Tristia* would probably have been a more appropriate task; but, as we have seen, Sandys does not belong to us and must rest among England's worthies with the benediction of Dryden upon his bones. It is sufficient to remark that it was to be many a year before verses of such strength and polish were again to be written in America, whether in Virginia or in the more northern colonies.

The early metrical essays of the Pilgrims and the Puritans are not so crude as Rich's ballad, but are perhaps not so creditable in view of the fact that the writers were more or less "clerkly" men, not soldiers of fortune. The meditative and historical verses of Governor William Bradford of Plymouth colony; the Latin hexameters descriptive of New England by the Rev. William Morell (*Nova Anglia*, 1625), which their author turned into English couplets; the quaint versified descriptions of William Wood, a worthy topographer who embellished his *New England's Prospect* (1634) with catalogues of native trees, fishes, and animals that Walt Whitman himself might well have envied; the anonymous *New England's Annoyances*, may all be passed over without regret. They are practically destitute of poetic merit. A few of Bradford's verses have an interest derived from the fine character of the man himself, and the other pieces are more or less interesting in their descriptive touches; but for the undesirable interest that springs from the contemplation of superlative crudity we must pass on to the celebrated *Bay Psalm Book*. This curiosity of literature, the first book published in British America, was supervised by Richard Mather, Thomas Welde, and the famous John Eliot, and printed at Cambridge, in 1640, by Stephen Daye, who had set up the first printing-press in America the year before. As might have been expected, it surpassed Sternhold and Hopkins in uncouth ruggedness, but, as it satisfied the tender consciences of them that desired to "sing in Sion the Lord's songs of prayse according to his owne wille," it may be held to have fulfilled the end of its existence and to be unamenable to much of the ridicule it has since received. It did not suit



every one, however, for ten years later that celebrated divine, the Rev. John Cotton, had to write a quaint tract to prove that the singing even of literal psalms was a godly exercise. It would, of course, represent the nadir of bathos but for the religious sincerity that went to its making. Having served a useful end, from the point of view at least of the political economist, it may be relegated to the lumber-room of literary curiosities, for the student of literature has no need to discuss seriously and at length a work that has practically no present currency, and that has had, through the defects of its qualities, no permanent literary influence. These defects will be sufficiently illustrated by two quotations taken at random:

The Lord's song sing can wee ? being  
in stranger's land, then let  
loose her skill my right hand if I  
Jerusalem forget.

And again:

The earth Iehovah's is,  
and the fulnesse of it:  
the habitable world, and they  
that there upon doe sit.

Epitaphs, elegies, and memorial verses generally were much in demand in New England during the Colonial Period. Many such effusions of but slightly better quality were being written in Old England at the same time. While four or five of the greatest English poems have belonged to this category of poetry, it is probably as true of English elegiac verse as it is of Greek, that no other poetical form shows such tolerance of mediocre powers on the part of the poet or versifier. This fact, together with the

obvious connection between meditations on death and the normal religious characteristics of the Puritans, sufficiently explains the abundance of New England memorial verse. One of the first of the godly divines to indulge his metrical proclivities in this way was John Cotton, whose encomiastic poem on his fellow-clergyman Samuel Stone, of Hartford, is worthy of citation as a sample of the contributions New England could make to the stock of that "fantastic" poetry of which Donne is very generally considered the great British exemplar. Here are the opening lines:

How well, dear Brother, art thou callèd Stone ?  
As sometime Christ did Simon Cephas own.  
A Stone for solid firmness fit to rear  
A part in Zion's wall and it upbear.  
Like Stone of Bohan, bounds fit to describe  
'Twixt Church and Church, as that 'twixt tribe and tribe.  
Like Samuel's Stone, erst Eben-Ezer hight,  
To tell the Lord hath helped us with his might.  
Like Stone in David's sling, the head to wound  
Of that huge Giant-Church, so far renowned——

As an American critic has remarked, none of these elegies or epitaphs can equal in audacity of quip and crank the notorious verses of Carew on Lady Maria Wentworth, nor are they, one may add, so colossal as the memorial tributes of Joshua Sylvester. The divines that made these feeble concessions to despised art were, however, not unable to hold their own with their British brethren, especially in the lower or lowest sphere of the anagram. Cotton Mather's reference to the Rev. John Wilson's skill in the latter exercise is noteworthy:

His care to guide his flocks and feed his lambs  
By words, works, prayers, psalms, alms, and anagrams.

The climax is suggestive, but must not be pushed too far.

It should be remarked in this connection that many of the poems of this period have been preserved in the boulderlike prose works that will be treated in later chapters. Where, as not infrequently happens, the authors of these prose works drop, in a literal sense of the word, into verse of their own making, the critic may as well keep silence. Thus the poetical divagations of Nathaniel Ward in his *Simple Cobbler of Agawam* need no remarks, but his verses prefixed to Mrs. Bradstreet's *The Tenth Muse*, wherein with more truth than poetry he called her "a right Du Bartas girl," lead us naturally to the consideration of the only figure in the annals of our early poetry that possesses any fair amount of interest.

Mrs. ANNE BRADSTREET was born in England in 1612, the daughter of Thomas Dudley, afterward Governor of Massachusetts, a grim Puritan, not, however, without a turn for verse-making. She was well educated in the classics and in the leading writers of her time, and came especially under the influence of the Fantastic or rather the Ponderous, School of Quarles and Sylvester, and, through the latter, of Du Bartas. At sixteen she married Simon Bradstreet, a typical Puritan of the better sort, whose education at Cambridge fitted him to be a proper companion to his gifted wife. Two years later, in 1630, the couple emigrated to New England, and settled finally near Andover in 1644. Meanwhile much of Mrs. Bradstreet's poetry had been written, she had become the mother of a large family, and her husband had gained that reputation for sobriety and good sense which finally made him governor of



the colony. In 1650 her poems were published in London, with a title-page, the first clause of which gives a sufficient proof of the high estimation in which she was held by her contemporaries: *The Tenth Muse, lately sprung up in America*. It is only right to add immediately that the "fair authoress" herself was not responsible for this early attempt to vindicate the genius of her sex, of which, although compact of modesty, she had a good opinion, as her verses "In Honour of Queen Elizabeth" plainly show. Her brother-in-law, the Rev. John Woodbridge, while on a visit to London, sought to bring glory to New England and to give pleasure to his sister by publishing, along with several of the then fashionable commendatory poems, compositions, which, in his own words, had "wrought so strongly on his addle brain." When seen in print, these potent compositions caused their creator to blush and to write a sort of envoy, in which she spoke of her book as a "rambling brat." This it surely was not, for it was very stiff-jointed, as its author confessed when she wrote:

I stretched thy joints to make thee even feet.

All her stretching and scrubbing, however—for like the good mother she was she refers to washing its face—could not make it a very presentable child of the imagination. Although plainly a simple woman in her affections and natural enough to feel a rising of the heart when she first came in contact with the stiff, primitive, unlovely life of the Puritans in the new world, she was not and could not be simple and natural in her literary relations. She was caught and carried under by the tide of fantastic affectation which, starting in Spain and Italy, had swept

over France and England with most disastrous results. The "profound learning," the "grave divinity" which she found in the encyclopedic *Creation* of Du Bartas dazzled her, as she confessed in her poem in his honour; all the more, as editors have properly observed, because the Frenchman was a true disciple of Calvin. She could not learn from her contemporary Milton how to fuse art and religion, nor could she catch Sidney's blending of grace and seriousness, although she could write verses in the latter's praise. Sylvester possessed her, if the jingle may be pardoned, and, although editors have sought to prove that she knew *Hamlet*, and it is clear that she knew Spenser and Raleigh, there was no other influence in the formative period of her life that could compete with his.

True to her Puritan conceptions as to the didactic value of poetry and to the example set her by her English masters, to whom one should probably add Phineas Fletcher, Mrs. Bradstreet's main endeavour was to describe "the four elements, constitutions, ages of man, seasons of the year." To this extensive scheme was added "an exact epitome of the four monarchies, viz., the Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, Roman." Her readers were further provided with "a dialogue between Old England and New concerning the late troubles," and "with divers other pleasant and serious poems." This cumbersome poetry, so suited to the taste of the age, has no value now to any living soul except the historian of literature. It is difficult to imagine how a pompous debate between the four elements on the subject of their respective merits and powers, or a rhyming chronicle, based on Raleigh's *History of the World*,

that descended the stream of time no farther than the reign of Tarquin the Proud, could ever have interested any one who did not remember the *Conflictus Hiemis et Veris* of the unknown mediæval poet and the historical poems and chronicles in verse that were not extinct at Mrs. Bradstreet's birth.<sup>1</sup> But there is no triter saying than that the literary food of one age is the poison of the next. It was in all sincerity, in spite of his pun, that John Norton wrote his often-quoted lines about her:

Her breast was a brave palace, a Broad-street :  
Where all heroic ample thoughts did meet,  
Where nature such a tenement had ta'en  
That others' souls to hers dwelt in a lane.

It was with equal sincerity that the Rev. John Rogers perpetrated his unfortunate metaphor with regard to the ravishing effects of her poetry upon his "virgin mind."

Thus weltering in delight, my virgin mind  
Admits a rape.

It does not ravish us moderns—indeed, hardly affords a quotation that would interest the general reader. There is an almost total absence of fine lines or couplets; there is an entire obliviousness of nature as she presented herself in the changing garb of the New England seasons; there are few or no glimpses of the prim, quaint life led by the poetess and her contemporaries. In substance her earlier verses are almost completely valueless. From the point of view of style her poetry interests only the technical student, who will notice some balanced couplets, some

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<sup>1</sup> Or even at the present time. A rhymed chronicle of the most primitive type was published in Tennessee in its centennial year, 1896.



curious rhymes, and at least one tribute to Queen Elizabeth that deserves to be memorable for its infelicity:

'Mongst hundred hecatombs of roaring verse,  
Mine bleating stands before thy royal hearse.

Her readers of 1650, however, cared little for such matters. Her learned personifications, whether of fire, melancholy, or old age, were to the sober Puritans wonderful instances of profane powers turned to godly uses. Her strictures on Old England's prelacy thrilled many a heart all the more intensely because of its own narrowness. Her hymns were at least metrically better than the psalms of the *Bay Psalm Book*, even after that famous volume had been amended (1650) by Messrs. Dunster and Lyon. Then again her Puritan readers were not without gallantry—it crops out ever and anon in their private letters—and the fact that a woman had written such learned effusions made them doubly anxious to sing her praises.

But even if gallantry continued to affect criticism, little praise could be given Anne Bradstreet's poetry had she not composed late in life a set of stanzas entitled "Contemplations." This poem, which appeared in the second edition of 1678, printed this time at Boston six years after the author's death, shows feeling for nature and some faint felicities of style. It is dangerous to dogmatize about literary influences, but it is plausible to maintain that Spenser, or more probably Phineas Fletcher, had become to her a more revered master than Sylvester. Such lines as

Close sate I by a goodly river's side,  
Where gliding streams the rocks did overwhelm,

suggest, faintly it is true, the fluidity of Spenser's verse. Such a couplet as

So unawares comes on perpetual night  
And puts all pleasures vain unto eternal flight,

although not full of original philosophy, is nevertheless not entirely crude as poetry; and the italicized verse in the following passage seems worthy of ungrudging praise:

The mariner that on smooth waves doth glide  
Sings merrily and steers his barque with ease,  
As if he had command of wind and tide,  
*And now become great master of the seas.*

The woman who in the New England of the seventeenth century could pen such a verse must have had glimpses of the fairyland of song denied to her contemporaries, and because she seems sadly unsuited to her hard and narrow environment, her figure has taken on a winning and pathetic aspect. But that she was not lacking in the prosaic power of giving vent to pithy sayings based on observation is shown by her pious and fairly interesting *Meditations Divine and Moral*, first printed from her manuscripts in 1867.

Although Mrs. Bradstreet was the best poet of seventeenth-century America, she did not write the best poem. If Nathaniel Bacon, the sturdy Virginian rebel, had gone to his unknown grave without the "Epitaph made by his Man," the poetry of the American plantations would have been shorn of its chief—nay, perhaps, its only—jewel. For in this epitaph we have what is in all probability the single poem in any true sense—the single product of sustained poetic art—that was written in America for

a hundred and fifty years after the settlement of Jamestown. The twenty-two couplets would not have made Andrew Marvell blush could he have been taxed with writing them. It is the irony of fate that this devoted follower, who in a more favourable environment might have added another name to the galaxy of the Restoration poets, should have left behind him not only no other traceable verses, but not even an ascertainable name. Yet he left his poem, which produced a satiric answer of some strength, and he accomplished his purpose of worthily defending his master's enigmatic character. Whether we agree or not with his delineation of that character, we cannot deny the poetic power of the following lines:

In a word,  
Mars and Minerva both in him concurred  
For arts, for arms, whose pen and sword alike,  
As Cato's did, may admiration strike  
Into his foes; while they confess withal  
It was their guilt styled him a criminal.

If John Cleveland could have been raised from the dead and transported to Virginia, to become Bacon's "man" as thoroughly as he had been Charles's man in England, he might have equalled these strong verses, but could hardly have surpassed them.

Returning now to New England, we may mention the often-quoted lines of Benjamin Woodbridge on John Cotton—that

—living, breathing Bible; tables where  
Both covenants at large engraven were.

Woodbridge, although he was the first graduate of Harvard, returned so soon to England that his hyperbolic



tribute must be credited to British literature, which could well do without it. A later graduate of Harvard, and its president, the Lactantius of New England, as he was styled, Urian Oakes (1631-87), has left an elegy upon the Rev. Thomas Shepard (1677), which demands some slight attention. It is a rather belated product of the Fantastic School, that scarcely seems to deserve the enthusiastic praise sometimes bestowed upon it. It is certainly true, however, that in its more than fifty six-lined stanzas, verses, and even whole stanzas, may be found that do not lack power. Pathos, too, is present, but beauty and pervasive charm seem to yield place to a straining after effect; yet they are the very qualities most essential to a successful elegy. Nevertheless, the poem is far superior to such tributes as Cotton Mather's egregious verses on Oakes himself, and it deserves remembrance if only for the following couplet:

Hee's gone alas! Down in the dust must ly  
As much of this rare person as could dy.

From such elegies it is a relief to turn to the homely verses of Franklin's maternal grandfather, Peter Folger, whose *Looking-Glass for the Times* was published in 1677. This poet and his work are the Orm and the *Ormulum* of America. One mildly poetical passage about a lamb has been discovered in the *Ormulum*, but the *Looking-Glass* of the garrulous Folger will not dazzle his readers with even a single poetic ray. A good deal must be pardoned, however, to such a sturdy champion of liberty of conscience. To his liberal grandson his ancestor's poem appeared to be written "with a manly freedom and a pleas-

ing simplicity," and if we disassociate from the epithet "pleasing" all notion of charm, this estimate of the effusion by a thoroughly unpoetical character may be allowed to stand.

We come now, in the natural order of things, to our first native-born bard, the "learned schoolmaster and physician, and ye renowned poet of New England," as he is styled on his tombstone, Benjamin Tompson. This worthy was born at Braintree, Massachusetts, in 1642; he died at Roxbury in 1714—"Mortuus sed immortalis," as his epitaph declared. His immortality depends rather upon his primacy of birth than upon the unchanging popularity of his *New England's Crisis*, an epic of King Philip's War, which long escaped the search of modern students. Still, it is interesting to conclude from his recovered poem that this scion of a new generation, although he yields little or nothing worth quoting, shows in his style and versification that, however much he might lament the increasing "luxury" of the times and the falling away from the sturdy, homely virtues of the fathers and mothers in Israel, the world moved on in the seventeenth century just as it does in the twentieth. Waller had crossed the Atlantic, and the day of Quarles and Sylvester was over. The monotonous versification of the eighteenth century is already threatening us, though not its inflated style, for Tompson does not lack a certain realistic power and its accompanying homeliness of phrase and humour.

But if Tompson is our first native versifier and a precursor of poetic change, MICHAEL WIGGLESWORTH (1631-1705) is surely the typical poet of Puritan New England.

Although born in England, he was enough of an American to receive his bachelor's degree at Harvard twenty years later. After serving the college for a short time as a tutor, he entered the ministry. Weak health frequently interrupted his labours of whatever kind, but led to his study of medicine—a pursuit which, it is charitable to hope, proved more of a boon to others than it did to himself. It is perhaps hard to associate the depicter of the gruesome horrors of the Day of Doom with a sociable, mild-mannered invalid, loved by several successive wives and by all who knew him. But an orthodox Calvinistic theology did not dry up the milk of human kindness in Wigglesworth, any more than in John Eliot or many another Puritan. It is true that to our modern notions there is no great welling of this milk even in the famous stanzas that mitigate the doom of the unregenerate infants, but we must remember not to intrude our sophisticated ideas upon the Puritan classic that was long so popular in New England. *The Day of Doom; or, A Poetical Description of the Great and Last Judgment*, first appeared in 1662, and consisted of a poetical version, in the style of Sternhold and Hopkins, of the texts of Scripture having reference to the awful, but to the Puritan mind congenial, subject. There is not a little curious ingenuity to be discovered here and there in the over two hundred stanzas that make up this New England *Inferno*. That it is quaint and readable, and that it contains descriptive stanzas that perhaps come near being poetry, needs hardly be urged; nor is it necessary to cite more than a few lines from a poem so often quoted. No quotation of moderate length can, however, do justice to that cleverly sophistical speech



of Wigglesworth's God to the "Reprobate Infants"—a speech that concludes as follows:

You sinners are, and such a share  
 as sinners may expect,  
 Such you shall have, for I do save  
 none but my own elect.  
 Yet to compare your sin with their  
 who liv'd a longer time,  
 I do confess yours is much less,  
 though every sin's a crime.

A crime it is, therefore in bliss  
 you may not hope to dwell;  
 But unto you I shall allow  
 the easiest room in Hell.

Even thus it is that the shivers of one generation become the smiles of the next.

But although *The Day of Doom* is Wigglesworth's masterpiece, the stanzas entitled "Vanity of Vanities," which seem to have been appended to the third edition of the former poem (1673), are decidedly better proof of the amiable clergyman's slight poetical capacity. They employ for lugubrious purposes that heroic quatrain which Davenant and Dryden had already used with effect. In versification and diction they are above the level of early New England verse, and they have a strength and terseness which appear, for certain reasons, to be original with Wigglesworth and are somewhat refreshing.

Besides the poems named, Wigglesworth—who wrote more verse than any of his contemporaries save Mrs. Bradstreet—was the author of two effusions of considerable length: one, *God's Controversy with New England*,

written at the time of the great drought of 1662, in a style that may be guessed; the other, *Meat out of the Eater*, a theological treatise in rhyme (1669). The latter was a very popular production, and has been shown to contain at least one spark of poetry:

War ends in peace, and morning light  
Mounts upon midnight's wing.

More than a single spark of poetry may be found in "A Funeral Song," which one of Wigglesworth's sons, Samuel by name, wrote when a youth of twenty to commemorate the death of a friend, Nathaniel Clarke, who died at sea. This really touching poem, which was composed in 1709, carries us far beyond the *Bay Psalm Book* both in time and in style. Such a stanza as

Fancy thyself shot through the ethereal world,  
Translated from the clay, amidst the seats  
Of highest angels, mighty seraphim,  
Of thrones, dominions, princes, potentates—

reveals the study of other masters than Sternhold and Hopkins. The religious commonwealths were becoming secular; life was no longer a series of vicissitudes; love of wealth and comfort was beginning to supplant fear of the Lord; in brief, the eighteenth century had fairly begun. It is time for us, therefore, to retrace our steps and to consider the prose treatises and tracts in which the sturdy colonists found a more congenial and appropriate form of self-expression than was afforded them by their verses.

## CHAPTER III

### ANNALISTS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

As in verse so in prose, the first literary efforts of the colonists were directed to the utilitarian end of sending home accounts of their doings and of inducing fresh immigrants to take up their abodes in the new world. In this class of compositions priority in time, if not primacy in interest, belongs to Captain John Smith's *A True Relation of Such Occurrences and Accidents of Note as hath Happened in Virginia*, which was published in London late in 1608. As we have already seen, American literature can lay but scanty claim to the productions of Smith and of some of his companions, but a few words about a tract which is interesting in itself and was both concerned with America and produced upon its soil may not be amiss. The *True Relation* is a pamphlet-letter of a soldier of fortune marked by not a little of that lift of style which Elizabethan wielders of sword and pen used to give to their structurally clumsy prose. The worthy captain found abundance of matter in the quarrels of the colonists, the vicissitudes of the settlement, and his own adventures as a hardy explorer of the wilderness; he had no occasion in the throes of composition to invoke the aid of anything but his own ebullient energy. If litera-



ture rests entirely on art, the *True Relation* may be uncomplainingly turned over to the historian, along with Smith's subsequent publications, which culminated in the composite *General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* (1624). If, however, it rests partly on life, then there is no reason completely to abandon the soldier-author to the far from tender mercies of the antiquaries, who accuse him of all sorts of faults and misdemeanours, chiefly because they do not find the rescue by Pocahontas, which is emphasized in the *General History*, even so much as mentioned in the *True Relation*. Clumsy, formless, inartistic, the works of this adventurer assuredly are; but within the shapeless mass there is a full pulse of life that may be detected by any reader who does not associate old books with mummies.

Of the other early Virginian news-tracts still less need be said. A catholic-minded reader can easily find in them something to interest him; but after all they are the property of the antiquary, not of the student of literature. Thus we must pass over the *Good News from Virginia* of the Rev. Alexander Whitaker, although his unselfish zeal for the spiritual welfare of the Indians and the pathos of his death by drowning make him a winning figure—far more so than the waggish ex-member of Parliament John Pory, whose extant narratives show him to have been characterized by some of Tartarin's magniloquence, but by few of that delightful Frenchman's delusions about the charms of colonial life.

After the struggles of the first years were over, Virginia was granted comparative legislative freedom (1619) and entered upon a somewhat flourishing period. Even her

lapse into the status of a Crown colony, her importation of negro slaves, her absorption of British pickpockets and other ne'er-do-wells into her population could not retard her growth when once it became clear that her tobacco crops could be made a reasonably secure source of wealth. The curling smoke that had got Raleigh his ducking and given the pedantic James something to write about was a better advertisement of the colony than anything that could come from the pens of the colonists. A decided lull in writing followed, nothing of any literary consequence being produced until a certain Colonel Henry Norwood, a kinsman of Sir William Berkeley, related to that stalwart governor some of the hair's-breadth adventures afterward described in his *Voyage to Virginia* (1649). The style of this interesting account is straightforward and clear as compared with the cumbrous phraseology of the earlier adventurers, although it is plain that Cowley and Dryden still have much to do in order to make English prose a thoroughly serviceable instrument of expression. Governor Berkeley was not moved to send for a printing-press from England in order that his relative's book might be set up in Virginia; he must, nevertheless, have enjoyed at his country house the descriptions given by the gallant colonel—not merely of the storm and wreck, and the kindness of the Indian fisherman, but also of the modest Portuguese lady who blushed with pleasure when the rough ship's company saw in her little son lineaments "full of sweetness" that reminded them of their exiled king—Charles the Second.

The few prose tracts that followed Norwood's were naturally political in character. The supersession of

Berkeley's governorship during the interregnum in England gave rise to no writings of importance, and after Berkeley was restored he was not in a mood to patronize letters. His celebrated reply to the queries sent out in 1670 by the Commissioners of Plantations represents the illiberal spirit with which he resumed his task of governing a colony that had grown apace in consequence of the expatriation of thousands of royalists: "But, I thank God, *there are no free schools nor printing*, and I hope we shall not have these hundred years; for *learning* has brought disobedience, and heresy and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them, and libels against the best government. God keep us from both!"

His ignorance and intolerance, combined with the imbecility and iniquity that characterized the policy of Charles II toward his subjects both in England and in America, soon brought Berkeley's administration to a dangerous pass. The Indian massacres of 1676 and the presence among the colonists of a sturdy leader precipitated the crisis. Nathaniel Bacon, a young man of wealth and the best English training, in defiance of the governor, took the field against the Indians and, until his mysterious death a few months later, headed the miniature and not altogether heroic "Rebellion" thus begun. Technically Berkeley had some grounds for the rather pathetic and not badly couched proclamation he issued against Bacon; but the latter had still more real grievances against the irascible old Cavalier. The details of the affair do not belong to us, but we are somewhat concerned with contemporary accounts such as the *History of Bacon's and Ingram's Rebellion*, written apparently by a certain Cot-



ton, of Acquia Creek, but better known as *The Burwell Papers*.<sup>1</sup> This is a comprehensive and fairly readable narrative composed by a man who has not learned the secrets of the new prose, but who has enough culture to be pedantic and affected after the manner of two generations before. Even his affectations cannot, however, deprive his story of dramatic interest when he describes Bacon's ruse of decoying the gentlewomen of Jamestown to his camp and then placing them in front of his troops as targets for the bullets which their husbands of course did not fire. But the Epitaph already described, which with its satiric answer closes the section entitled "Bacon's Proceedings," is by far the best thing in the narrative, and, if it really was composed by Bacon's "man," makes one feel that servants were often as superior to their fate in early Virginia as Grecian slaves were in ancient Rome.

The only other Baconian tract worth mentioning is both shorter and later. It was written in 1705 for the benefit of Harley, afterward Lord Oxford, and the initials of its author, T. M., are supposed to stand for Thomas Matthews, a burgess from Stafford County during the turmoils he described in a simple, unadorned style. Like Cotton, however, Matthews evidently belonged in point of mental development to the older rather than to the newer generation, for he began with a serious recital of the three prodigies that were taken as ominous presages by the Virginians of 1675. Modern readers are

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<sup>1</sup> From the fact that until early in the nineteenth century the manuscript remained in the hands of a Virginian family of that name who were connected with the famous rebel.

not interested so much by the comet, the flight of pigeons, and the swarms of flies, as by the picture of rash Sir William's baring his breast to Bacon for a target, with the exclamation: "Here, shoot me! Fore God, fair mark! Shoot!"

Bacon and Berkeley would be interesting figures with which to close our sketch of Virginian literature during the seventeenth century, but we fortunately have another figure almost as interesting and certainly more important in the history of culture. This is the Rev. James Blair (1656-1742), whose main publications, five volumes of sermons on the Sermon on the Mount, date from the eighteenth century and are written in comparatively modern prose. His true significance, however, lies in the fact that in 1693, after great discouragements, he laid at Williamsburg the foundations of William and Mary College, the first and for long the only real institution of learning in the Southern colonies. Over this college, which has a lengthy roll of alumni and is again prospering, the zealous and pious divine presided for half a century, unmindful of the brutal advice of Sir Edward Seymour, William III's attorney-general, who, when approached for help relative to securing the charter, had exclaimed in reply to a plea based on the spiritual needs of the colonists: "Souls—damn your souls! Grow tobacco." The colonists did continue to grow tobacco, nor did they profit greatly from the college in point of literary achievements; but they found in it an admirable seminary of political learning and civic virtues, and they drew from it, before a century had gone by, statesmen like Thomas Jefferson who were destined to visit the sins of

King William's early adviser upon subsequent British statesmen.

Virginia's neighbours to the north and south—Maryland and the Carolinas—are easily disposed of so far as concerns their productions in prose during the seventeenth century. The last-named plantations were founded toward the close of the century and furnished only the most prosaic of so-called "accounts" or descriptive narratives, although surely the belated mediævalism of Locke's famous Fundamental Constitutions might have afforded material for a satirist. The petty squabbles of the Marylanders with one another and with their neighbours gave rise to writings of mere antiquarian interest, but these are fortunately supplemented by a quaintly optimistic tract entitled *Leah and Rachel*, written in London in 1656 by one John Hammond, who was anxious that the poor people he saw on all sides in the mother-country should be induced to emigrate to the fertile daughter colonies. Quaintness of a still more marked type characterized a small book published ten years later by a certain George Alsop, and entitled *A Character of the Province of Maryland*. Little is known of the author except that he was an indentured servant who left England a pronounced anti-Cromwellian, his political proclivities being shown by the fact that he devoted some of the ragged verses scattered through his book to an execration of the Lord Protector. That worthy, if he could have read Alsop, would doubtless have been more shocked by the somewhat ribald and occasionally obscene character of the latter's "melancholy muse." With regard to the prose portions of the volume it can scarcely be denied that they



are far more entertaining than most other similar productions, whether Alsop is describing the province of Maryland itself or the Susquehanna Indians, or his own experiences during his servitude. His letters to his relatives in which these experiences are narrated would not serve as models of epistolary composition, but one can pardon a good deal to a man who could write:

Here, if the devil had such a vagary in his head as he once had among the Gadarenes, he might drown a thousand head of hogs, and they'd ne'er be missed; for the very woods of this province swarm with them.

Thirteen years after the planting of Jamestown, the small congregation of sectaries known as Brownists, who had been in exile at Leyden, landed at Plymouth Rock and became, for posterity at least, the Pilgrim Fathers. They were not of a stock from which much in the way of literature was to be expected; but they were neither unin-  
tellectual nor unimaginative, and their position in the vanguard of the hosts of freedom, religious and civil, made it necessary that they should wield their pens in defence of the cause for which they had braved exile. Had they continued to live in England or Holland their outward and inward lives would doubtless be far less known to us; as it is, the struggles of the young colony and the habits and thoughts of the God-fearing colonists are comparatively familiar to their descendants. The prudence of Bradford and the valour of Miles Standish, the suppression of Morton and his crew at Merrymount, the ultra-righteousness of the women who eschewed whalebone and starch and of the men who fasted and prayed and exhorted with a zeal worthy of the days of Peter the Her-

mit, are school-book commonplaces to most Americans. In consequence the importance of the little Plymouth colony is usually overestimated; for the really effective planting of New England took place in 1629–30, when John Winthrop and his associates, many of whom were men of property and of Cambridge training, founded the colony of Massachusetts Bay. During the decade 1630–40, which was that of Laud and Wentworth's policy of "Thorough," thousands of English Puritans crossed the Atlantic and formed congregations in Massachusetts. Then migration practically ceased, but the colonists multiplied and, following an habitual American tendency, formed new centres of population. The Connecticut towns were grouped into one colony, the Rhode Island towns into another; Massachusetts, however, absorbed Plymouth and controlled the settlements in what were later New Hampshire and Maine. But these colonies were not only for a long time a Confederacy, but also a group of communities possessing many common characteristics. The plain people were pious and hardy and thrifty, wresting a living from a grudging soil or from the sea, or else plying useful trades in the small towns. Over them stood as spiritual, though not as legal masters, a very learned clergy, who from the beginning formed what one of the most gifted of their descendants was fond of calling a Brahmin caste. Allied with these were godly lay magistrates; and all classes—farmers, sailors and fishers, traders, ministers of the Word, and judges, councillors, and governors—were bound together as members of the pure and true Church of God set up in the free and blessed land of New England. To defend themselves against foes

abroad and sectaries at home, to foster the patriotism of the rising generation, to set down in enduring form the manifold mercies of God, the two learned classes, especially the clergy, needed to use their pens unceasingly. As we have seen, they did not disdain to write verse, but art was not congenial to them, because their imaginations were busy with prophesies and prodigies, with wrestling with fiends, with service in the Church Militant that should in time bring in the Church Triumphant. For their purposes the sermon, the controversial tract, the annalistic history, were proper literary instrumentalities, and they produced them in numbers that throw into the shade the sparse books and pamphlets of the colonies to the south. A complete treatment of this voluminous prose literature is impossible here, but its leading monuments may be briefly described in this and the following chapter.

The earliest writing done in New England is probably to be found in a journal composed by WILLIAM BRADFORD (1590–1657)—almost continuously governor of Plymouth colony—and EDWARD WINSLOW (1595–1655), a most interesting man of action and diplomacy. This was published in 1622, and was long known, through a mistake, as *Mourt's Relation*. The story of the planting of Plymouth runs its simple, interesting course from November 9, 1620, the day land was sighted by the Mayflower, through the perils of the ensuing winter, almost to the close of 1621. Such a subject-matter obviously lends the *Journal* interest, but its authors deserve their share of credit for a narrative style that is only slightly quaint and cumbersome, and for infusing into their



pages more of human nature than of Puritanism. Perhaps Winslow's portion shows more graphic qualities than Bradford's; at any rate, it is plain that these qualities are to be found in the former's *Good News from New England* (1624), which continues the *Relation*, and is particularly interesting in its descriptions of the diplomatic author's relations with the Indians. Later in life Winslow wrote other books, but he seems at his best as a sprightly young diarist.

Dignity, sobriety, benignity, and piety give us both the rhyme and the reason of the hold Governor Bradford had upon his fellow-colonists and still keeps upon posterity. He was first of all a great man of the balanced type of which Washington and Alfred the Great are perhaps the noblest exemplars; next he was an excellent statesman, although within a limited sphere; finally he was something of a scholar, as well as an historiographer of authority and of fair literary power. It cannot be said that he is a picturesque figure like Captain John Smith, for, as has been well remarked, to pass from the founder of Virginia to the governor of Plymouth is like passing from *Amadis of Gaul* to the *Pilgrim's Progress*. But the interest of his times and of the enterprise of which he was a leader attaches to him, as well as the personal interest aroused by a symmetrical character. He was well qualified for the task of writing the memorials of Plymouth, for he had been with the Separatists in Holland and had presided over their fortunes in the new world. He began his book in 1630, and worked on it for twenty years, bringing the narrative down to the year 1646, though intending to carry it farther. He was con-

scientifically thorough and made good use of authoritative documents, while considering the needs of his readers by the adoption of a style of fair straightforwardness and simplicity in view of the epoch at which he wrote. Not infrequently, however, the spiritual emotion, never long absent from a true Puritan, overmastered him and informed his pages with a pathos and a dignity that lose nothing through their antiquated garb. One short passage, full of these qualities, is constantly quoted:

So they lefte that goodly and pleasante citie, which had been their resting place near twelve years; but they knew they were pilgrims, and looked not much on those things, but lift up their eyes to the heavens, their dearest countrie, and quieted their spirits.

This is not "organ-prose" such as Milton was about to sound against the oppressors of these mild sectaries, but it is prose that is not without charm, and, truth to say, it is distinctly above the level of the worthy governor's style, which hardly tempts one to a minute perusal of his monumental work. Still, much duller books than Bradford's have been written by American historiographers, although, perhaps, the history of his manuscript will be more interesting to the general reader than anything it contains. It seems to have been used copiously by his nephew Nathaniel Morton in a volume entitled *New England's Memorial* (1669), which for a long time obtained a celebrity based on borrowed lustre. In the next century the manuscript was owned by the historian Prince, and was used by him and by Governor Hutchinson. Prince appears to have deposited it in a library he had formed in the tower of the Old South Church, in Boston. After the Revolutionary War it could not be found, and it remained

undiscovered until 1855, when a New England gentleman, while reading Bishop Wilberforce's brief account of the American Episcopal Church, came across certain passages described as taken from a manuscript history of Plymouth in Fulham Library, which he recognised as identical with extracts from Bradford quoted by American historians. The clew thus obtained was followed up, the manuscript proved to be Bradford's, the Bishop of London gave permission to copy and print, and in 1856 the long-standing gap in our early literature was filled. It was not a case of the recovery of "One precious, tender-hearted scroll Of pure Simonides"; but it was and is an occasion for thankfulness. Finally in 1897 the late Bishop Creighton gracefully delivered the manuscript to the custody of the Governor of Massachusetts.

It is not necessary to dwell upon William Wood's topographical and ethnological treatise *New England's Prospect*, although it is rather more interesting than works of its useful class generally are. Nor is it worth while to discuss the personal narratives of one sort or another that have been rescued from oblivion by the pious care of the antiquarian and historical societies. Here and there, however, one encounters in these narratives a passage that throws an interesting light upon the ability of the Puritan mind to ferret out special providences. For example, it was a special providence that directed the wife of Captain John Underhill to persuade that doughty warrior to wear his helmet in the expedition against the Pequot Indians—in consequence of which his life was saved and his soldierly book *News from Amer-*



*ica* given to the world. His wife's proceeding seemed to Captain Underhill to savour something of a Delilah trick, but he was gracious enough to write "Let no man despise advice and counsel of his wife, though she be a woman." The tricks of the Indians, however, were another matter and availed them nothing, the servants of the Lord firing their wigwams and spending the day "burning and spoiling the country." Many years later Underhill's colleague, Captain John Mason, wrote an account of the same valiant enterprise in which he gave his ideas on military policy in a dignified way and told his story in direct homely phrases, with all the confidence of a Joshua in the personal interest of Jehovah in the enterprise.

Much more important than military leaders like Underhill and Mason was Governor JOHN WINTHROP, the peaceful founder and director of Massachusetts. Winthrop was a man of higher social standing than his brother magistrate Bradford, and possessed a mind better trained and probably more philosophical, although from the point of view of the student of literature his writings are in some respects less attractive. He was born in Suffolk, England, in 1588, and died in Boston in 1649. A magistrate and landed gentleman of means, his position among the Puritan emigrants was assured from the first, but his moral character was his chief title to the veneration of those who followed him to the wilderness "for conscience' sake." In Massachusetts he was annually elected governor almost as continuously as Bradford in Plymouth, and he ruled the larger colony with the greater statesmanship that was demanded. Like Bradford, he

took time to compose memorials of his life which are of very great value to the historical student. His diary was begun while the fleet was still riding in the English harbour, and was continued, though with frequent interruptions so far as details are concerned, almost to his death. He also wrote upon the ship that bore him over a short *Model of Christian Charity* that bears witness to his genuine piety, and in his numerous letters one may easily discover traces of that essential humanity which Puritanism could not smother in him and many another New Englander of the time, any more than it could in Milton and Colonel Hutchinson. Indeed, it may be doubted whether many contemporary Cavaliers and their wives exchanged such beautifully affectionate letters as did John Winthrop and Margaret, his third wife.

But the *History of New England* is Winthrop's *magnum opus*. Opinions of it vary according as we view it as literature or as material for history. It is dignified, impartial, and interspersed with passages showing the writer's philosophical grasp of affairs. The address to the Assembly of 1645 concerning liberty and authority is worthy of the high praise it has received and could have come only from a noble and a trained mind, a mind capable of the high idealism of the *Model of Christian Charity*. Many of the incidents and characterizations introduced are readable and redeem the balder jottings of the diarist. But when everything is said, it remains true that the worthy governor was no artist—which is another way of saying that his style is dry. We can forgive him his superstitions—his stories, for example, of children perishing because of the ungodliness of their parents; we can admire

his fine qualities; but somehow he does not charm us as Bradford frequently does.

It is a far cry from the philosophical Governor Winthrop to the partisan Captain EDWARD JOHNSON. Born in 1599, the latter was still young when he came over with Winthrop, but he seems to have possessed some standing in Kent, his native county. In Massachusetts he became one of the founders of the town of Woburn, and probably its leading citizen. He appears to have been something of a soldier and was undoubtedly a typically zealous Puritan, full of intolerant spiritual fervour, yet withal a practical and kindly man. He filled various positions of trust until his death, in 1672, and was in respect of first-hand knowledge qualified for the task of writing the early annals of the colony.

In two respects, however, he was woefully unqualified. He was almost totally destitute of literary ability and the historical temperament. Yet, paradoxically enough, these defects which should have ruined his book have served to make it one of the most interesting productions of the epoch. His uncouthness and his partisanship prevented him from being in the least affected, and made him unconsciously present his latter-day readers with the very "form and pressure" of the time. He was personally familiar with the events and the men he described; he had a thoroughly laudable purpose; he went at his task with all his might, and became what we may perhaps denominate a Praise-God-Barebones Thucydides.

The worthy captain was moved to write, like so many other colonists, in order to disprove the scandals about New England circulating in the mother-country. He



gave his treatise the silencing title of *The Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Saviour in New England*, and marshalled his facts to heroic strains so strenuous that it may be truly said that hardly a page belies the title. Bibliographers tell us that it has the honour of being the first printed history of New England—or, rather, of Massachusetts. It describes the fortunes of the colony to the year 1651—that is, to about three years before it was published in London. Such prosaic facts are of no consequence, however, to the reader who finds himself perusing the proclamation which Christ incited his heralds to make to the evil-entreated saints. “Oh yes! oh yes! oh! All you the people of Christ that are here Oppressed, Imprisoned, and scurrilously derided, gather yourselves together, your wives and little ones, and answer to your Names as you shall be shipped for his service in the Western World.” We have here the clew to the whole book, but we are likely to read on. Time not having been so valuable in the seventeenth century as now, we need not be surprised to find our zealous soldier, who likes to write of armies with banners, “regiments of the Soldiers of Christ,” in a fashion that ought to delight modern advocates of the “strenuous life,” taking no fewer than sixteen chapters to land the Puritans in the new world. Then he proceeds to consider each church or congregation in a short chapter, equal importance being assigned to notable ministers and magistrates, who are treated to very rough-hewn verses as well as to high-sounding prose. It is needless to give further details, or to enlarge upon Captain Johnson's intolerance toward all who did not believe as he did, nor need we censure his lack of critical

capacity, his rampant Hebraism, his superstitious belief in absurd special providences, his phenomenal lack of humour. It is better to emphasize his sincerity, his quaint picturesqueness, his possession of sublime confidence in the righteousness and glory of the cause of the saints, his exhibition of not a little of that swelling vein of thought and language that marks the belated Elizabethan. He moves to mirth, but with his very uncouthness he fascinates, as extremely ugly people are sometimes found to do. And we know that at the least he was doughty, that he had some of the vigour of Cromwell in him. Witness the typically militant Puritanism of these words: "Be not daunted at your small numbers, for every common Soldier in Christ's Camp shall be as David, who slew the great Goliah, and his Davids shall be as the Angel of the Lord, who slew 185,000 in the Assyrian Army."

DANIEL GOOKIN is not a name dear to the Muses, but Clio, at least, ought not to smile at it. He was born in Kent, about 1612. Nine years later he came to Virginia and shared in the horrors of the massacre of 1622 wrought by the infuriated Indians. Surviving, he remained in the colony until 1644, when he removed to Massachusetts on account of his sympathy with those Puritan usages which the Virginians were resolved not to tolerate. At his new home in Cambridge he soon took a leading hand in affairs. In 1656 he was made superintendent of the Indians under the jurisdiction of the colony, and in this office worked nobly in conjunction with John Eliot, who has received greater applause from posterity. When King Philip's War came on Gookin and Eliot stood out against the popular terror and delirium, especially in behalf of the

Christianized Indians. The former in particular had to pay the penalty of being in advance of his contemporaries in moral and intellectual greatness, for he was hooted in the streets and threatened with violence. When ten years later he espoused the popular cause against James II and the agents of that tyrant, Randolph and Andros, he could afford to smile at human fickleness, for in his defence of rights for which other patriots were later to endure the hardships of war, he became a local hero. He died in 1687 in honourable poverty, an incorruptible citizen of an inspiring type.

Gookin's first work, *Historical Collections of the Indians of New England*, was written in 1674, but lay in manuscript until 1792. In a postscript to this undertaking the author announced in a dignified way his purpose to complete an elaborate history of New England, the plan of which he wrote out with great care. This history, finished during his advancing years, seems to have been accidentally destroyed by fire after his death. He also wrote a second work about his beloved Indians, entitled *An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians in New England*. This appears to have been finished in 1677, and was, perhaps, sent to England for publication. There it was long lost sight of, but was finally found and sent back to America, where it was printed in 1836. Gookin's first and better-known treatise—if, indeed, anything of his can be spoken of as known—save to close readers of Thoreau, who often quoted him—discusses in a style that can be read with ease and considerable interest the vexed question of the origin of the Indians, their various tribes, their customs, and similar



topics. It sketches the advance made toward Christianizing the savages, and is particularly interesting when dealing with Eliot. The account of the Indian youths trained at Harvard is also attractive through its pathos and sincerity, and it is worth while to read how old Wampanacut was finally persuaded to enter the new canoe of Christianity.

Daniel Gookin deserves praise for his defence of the Indians, but we must not forget that the dreadful matter had another side at which the colonists would inevitably look when the sufferings of such a woman as Mrs. Mary Rowlandson were brought home to them. This pastor's wife was dragged from her burning house at Lancaster, Massachusetts, in February, 1676, and suffered a captivity of nearly twelve weeks. Her narrative of her experiences under the main title of *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* appeared in 1682, was speedily reprinted in London, and was reissued several times in the century and a half ensuing. Her style hardly merits the praise it has received, but it is unaffected, and the little book, which contained matter of sufficient interest and pathos to curdle the blood of contemporaneous readers, even stirs the pulses of generations far removed from such terrible perils.

King Philip's War and its accompanying outrages, of course, occupied other pens beside those of Gookin and Mrs. Rowlandson, the celebrated Increase Mather, for example, being responsible for two volumes. But the classical book on Indian atrocities was produced by a clergyman who may be treated with the laymen, since his strictly theological writings have been overshadowed

by his two elaborate histories. The Rev. William Hubbard was born in 1621 and came over with his parents in 1630. Graduating from Harvard in 1642, he became pastor at Ipswich, Massachusetts, and served until 1703, the year before his death. His learning and his piety seem to have endeared him to his contemporaries and he enjoyed the reputation of being what the next century called an "elegant writer." His style is not so attractive to us on account of its comparative lack of raciness, but it does indicate an advance toward ordered and balanced modern prose. His most extensive work was *A General History of New England from the Discovery to 1680*, first printed in 1815; a clear narrative, but marred by wholesale borrowing from previous annalists. His *Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New England from the Earliest Settlements to 1677*, which was published both at Boston and at London during the year named in its title, is a more interesting and important, if rather unauthoritative production. It seems to have had a large popular circulation for those days, and was read in provincial editions down and into the nineteenth century. Modern readers would, however, find it tedious and clumsy in spite of its author's obvious pains to furnish a narrative worthy of what he naturally believed to be great events.

It is needless to discuss at length the historical and topographical productions of the Middle Colonies, if only for the reason that in the main they are not written in English. An exception may be made in favour of Gabriel Thomas's *An Historical and Geographical Account of the Province and County of Pennsylvania and*

of *West New Jersey* (London, 1698), not merely because it brings us up to the close of our allotted period, the seventeenth century, but because it is much more readable than such accounts usually are. Not unpleasing, for example, are the pictures of provincial villages, especially of "Gloucester-Town, which is a very Fine and Pleasant Place, being well stor'd with Summer Fruits, as Cherries, Mulberries, and Strawberries, whither young People come from Philadelphia on the Wherries to eat Strawberries and cream, within sight of which city it is sweetly situated, being but about three Miles distance from thence." We are all the more inclined to trust the truth of the descriptions given by this sprightly man, who was one of the first immigrants to Pennsylvania, because he expressly states that never having been in East New Jersey, he "cannot properly or pertinently speak to that matter." Such reticence did not characterize many of the chroniclers whom we have reviewed, nor have we found many of them so full of genial humanity as Thomas, but it would be unfair to leave them without acknowledging their piety, their learning, their courageous optimism, their general intellectual sanity, their attractive quaintness, and their essential manliness. They were no bad founders of a national literature, their own characters and writings having been founded on the English Bible.



## CHAPTER IV

### NEW ENGLAND DIVINES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

ALTHOUGH a few noteworthy clergymen can be found in the annals of the Southern and Middle Colonies, a clerical caste of predominant importance existed only in New England, because there only was to be seen in full working a practical theocracy. Easy-going planters could and often did tolerate clergymen of no intellectual attainments and not infrequently of loose morals, but an intelligent and more or less commanding priesthood was essential to a theocratic government. In the case of the New England theocracy there were special reasons why the clergy should be autocratic to a degree remarkable even in a theocracy. The Englishman does not readily accept the superiority of others, hence to maintain their ascendancy the New England ministers had to be great men in every capacity—great counsellors in matters both secular and religious, great scholars, great preachers, and great private characters. Besides, the sturdy Puritans were ultra-Protestants—that is, they followed boldly the workings of their own minds; hence their ministers to dominate them had to be acute logicians and powerful reasoners. Pastors and their flocks alike reasoned, to be sure, on

what appear to us to be narrow lines; if catholicity be a requisite of greatness, they were far from great. But greatness seems rather to rest on essential power, and power is often conspicuously displayed by narrow men working upon narrow lines. Of power, of sheer indomitable force, no body of citizens and no caste have probably ever been such complete exemplars as the Puritans of New England and their godly ministers, unless it be the French under the first impulses of their revolutionary fervour, or the Arabs under Mohammed.

But besides the force inherent in Anglo-Saxon Protestants living in a century of political and theological contentions, we must reckon with the intensity that was generated both in people and in clergy by their isolation and by their previous history. They were exiles for what they believed to be the truth, however much it was actually mixed with error, and for their rights as men, however much they were inclined to deny the rights of others. They were also cut off from the rest of the world and had to brood upon their own aloofness, whether or not they made it a matter of pride. Suffering and isolation inevitably develop intensity of character, as the descendants of the Puritans were destined to learn when, in the civil war, they grappled over slavery with the descendants of the Cavaliers. Sheer power and burning intensity, at least in spiritual matters, being thus characteristic of the mass of the inhabitants of New England, who under other circumstances might have been more or less sluggish, it followed of necessity that their pastors were indeed mighty men of the Lord, capable of praying and preaching for hours at a stretch, zealous rebukers of the

froward, mentors of the civil magistrates, natural instructors of youth, wrestlers with God in fastings and supplications, drivers out of devils, and sworn foes to witches and heretics—in short, prophets, priests, and uncrowned kings among the congregations of the faithful.

But all this does not prove that they need a chapter to themselves in a history of literature. Probably, as we have already seen, they would not have needed one had they remained in England; their unique and isolated position in the wilderness stimulated, however, their literary activity necessarily and to a marked degree. They had to give an account of themselves to their brethren in England, and they were forced to utilize every means in their power to maintain themselves in their theocracy. Elaborate and learned sermons, theological and historical treatises, gave them prestige among their parishioners, and if the printing-press, of which they were licensors, was to be made an instrument of God's glory, it was surely the divines that must keep it busy. Besides, the sermon, at least, was next to the Scriptures, the most important item in the life of New England. Church, pastor, and sermon took the place of modern theatres, newspapers, lectures, novels, and even of political speaking. The meeting-house was the centre of town life; the minister was the centre of the church, no matter where his high pulpit was placed; the sermon was the centre of the minister's weekly work. Under these circumstances and when we remember how large was the proportion of university graduates among the first settlers, especially in Massachusetts, it is no wonder that a voluminous body of writings was produced by the early divines and by their sons in the Gospel trained



by them in the college founded at Cambridge on the benefaction of the Rev. John Harvard.

The present literary value of this body of writings is, to be sure, not high. Sermons and theological treatises, even when composed by masters of style, occupy much the same position with regard to prose literature as a whole that didactic verse does to poetry as a whole. No other class of compositions dies a speedier death. When the writer on religious topics attains the dignity of being regarded as a classic he is nearly always relegated to the sad limbo of the classics that are not read. Even the great English divines of the seventeenth century, including Barrow and Tillotson, hardly live to-day save in the person of Jeremy Taylor. But the New England divines of the same century are not even granted the doubtful honour of being ranked with the dead-alive classics, for, although such men as Thomas Hooker and Cotton maintained in part their hold upon their co-religionists of the mother-country, provincial isolation in the end limited greatly the fame of all American colonial writers save Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin, who in the following century represented the colonial mind in its two dominant phases—its interest in religion and its utilitarianism. Yet those students who contend that these forgotten divines of early New England were possessed of literary powers of no mean order, and that their sermons were especially marked by imaginative force, are not entirely deluded by the fallacies that, according to Matthew Arnold, attend the "historic estimate" of literature. Beneath the ponderous learning of the clergy and the rugged uncouthness of their parishioners burned a fire of imagination

that did not die down until two or three generations had passed away, and that has never completely died out, as the crusading fervour of the abolitionists and the latter-day zeal of the "anti-imperialists" plainly prove. That this imagination busied itself with the saving of souls rather than with the carving of statues or the writing of plays and poems does not necessarily detract much from its quality or anything from its quantity. Still, when all is said, it is plain that the pictures we form of the clergyman in his tall pulpit thundering his minatory periods over his rigid and sombre yet inwardly glowing congregation, with the children gathered on the pulpit-steps and the constable stealthily awakening a sleeper with his rod, will always be more interesting to us moderns than the dusty tomes in which this bygone eloquence and learning is securely buried.

Out of the mass of the seventeenth-century clergy only one figure has emerged into anything like world importance—that noble man whose name at once suggests the "stone rejected of the builders," Roger Williams. Another figure that stood for the past even more sturdily than Williams for the future, Cotton Mather, is something more than a mere name to us, although far from being rated at his true worth. The other "giants" of the century, to whom contemporaries were wont to lift admiring eyes, are, with practically the sole exception of John Eliot, who seems apostolic rather than gigantic, little more than names even to cultivated Americans, and are not even names to Europeans. It would obviously be a futile task to attempt to make them live again—the zeal and learning of accomplished writers with abundant

space at their command can succeed only in giving galvanic twitches to their dry sinews—yet the achievements of a few of them may be described in order that the importance and general characteristics of the literary work of the entire Brahmin caste may be better understood.

Whether or not that persecuted apostle of toleration and great founder of a small commonwealth, Roger Williams, occupies in the eyes of posterity the first place among seventeenth-century American divines, it is plain that this was not the position accorded him by the mass of his contemporaries. Most early New Englanders would probably have asserted the supremacy either of Williams's inveterate opponent, John Cotton, or of the autocrat of Hartford, Thomas Hooker. Lovers of the milder virtues might have mentioned the name of Thomas Shepard. Nor need we smile in contempt, for in sheer force a man who sums up his generation may excel a man who forms a fraction of the future. It is true that neither Hooker nor Cotton nor Shepard completely summed up his generation, but they came near doing it, especially the first named, who in his political theories held by the future also.

Thomas Hooker, when he died, in 1647, was sixty-one years of age, and had passed fourteen of them in New England. He had been an eloquent and zealous Puritan in England, had fled from Laud to the Low Countries, had spent three years preaching to the church at Cambridge, Massachusetts, and had headed his congregation in their westward migration to Connecticut. Supreme in his own settlement of Hartford, he was also perhaps the chief framer of the constitution adopted by the



Connecticut towns in 1639. This document seems to have the honour of being the first written instrument that created a workable and lasting government. It was impregnated with a liberal, democratic spirit rare for that age, and this fact speaks much for Hooker's force of character and for his prescience. Hooker was to his people in almost a literal sense prophet, priest, and king. His power to foretell events was believed in by himself and his admirers. He was consulted almost as a confessor, and was a peculiarly powerful exhorter of the denunciatory type. He showed imperial self-confidence, and for all his democracy ruled by one sort of divine right. The great qualities that lend interest to his biography are not, indeed, so salient in his writings, but they are not invisible. Nor need one read his published works under their twenty-three titles to find them, since a few pages from *The Soul's Implantation* (1637) or *The Soul's Vocation* (1638) will reveal them. His style is less involved, and therefore more forcible and readable than that of most of the annalists, for as a preacher he was constrained to remember the limitations of the human ear.

That Hooker's theology was less anæmic than that of his latter-day successors needs scarcely to be stated. He and his peers fervently believed that humanity is everywhere engaged in perpetual warfare with a personal devil, and that this warfare was particularly virulent there in the Western wilderness which the fiends were disputing with the saints. What with fiends, and the Indians and witches that abetted them, there was need that every man, woman, and child—nay, almost the very infant in arms—should not merely be joined visibly to the church,

but should have an inward conviction of his or her stability in a state of grace. To resist the offered means of salvation—which, however, could not prevail over a predetermined but thoroughly just and merciful sentence of damnation—was a heinous offence.

“Alas,” says Hooker, “thou mayest justly suspect that God never intends good to thy soul; it is no absolute conclusion, but it is a great suspicion, that those which have lived under a powerful ministry half a dozen years or longer and have got no good nor profited under the same, it is a shrewd suspicion, I say, that God will send them down to hell.”

Thomas Shepard, besides many sermons, left an autobiography which gives us a vivid description of an unpleasant interview with Archbishop Laud, who could not be moved by his victim's piety and ill health to permit such a “soul-melting preacher” to expound Puritan ideals. If Laud had encountered instead Mistress Joanna Shepard, of whom her husband, while claiming that “she was a woman of incomparable meekness of spirit,” admits that “she had an excellency to reprove for sin, and discern the evils of men,” the prelate's intolerance might have been pardonable. But this particular Mrs. Shepard was the daughter of Hooker and the heiress of some, at least, of his virtues; she may, therefore, be regarded as one of Shepard's rewards for the persecution that finally drove him to Massachusetts in 1635, in the thirtieth year of his age. He laboured in Boston for fourteen years, opposing the antinomian heresies of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson which caused so much uncharitable controversy, publishing *New England's Lamentations for Old England's Errors* (1645),

and other treatises, delivering sermons full of the essence of Calvinism and of the God-intoxication of the epoch, and giving the infant Harvard the benefit of a culture derived, as was common, from Emmanuel College, Cambridge. As a man, although not free from morbidity, he seems to have been one of the pleasantest figures of a grim epoch; as a writer, he was not devoid of some of the simpler virtues or indeed of the artifices of style; as a theologian, he was held in great repute by his fellow-Brahmins—to such an extent, indeed, that his fame survived sufficiently to warrant the publication in Boston of an edition of his writings bearing the surprisingly late date of 1853.

That the great JOHN COTTON should demand no more than two paragraphs may be cited as a good instance of historical irony. His fellow-Puritans of New England regarded him as a portent of good, whose illness and final taking off in 1652, at the age of sixty-seven, were accompanied by a portent of a very different sort—to wit, a comet. But even Prof. Moses Coit Tyler, the most scholarly and thoroughly appreciative explorer of our colonial literature, had to confess that it is impossible to understand from Cotton's writings how he could have obtained such a hold upon his contemporaries. Yet that they idolized him admits of no doubt. In John Norton's life of him he is compared with Solon, St. Paul, Polycarp, and any other ancient worthy that the later worthy, who was New England's Calvin, can think of. He is a "silver trumpet," a "*musa attica*," who, we are glad to learn, overcame in discussion at Cambridge a certain William Chappell, apparently the tutor with whom a yet greater



Puritan, John Milton, afterwards had a still unexplained altercation. But against Laud even Cotton, after he had abandoned academic rhetoric for Puritan plain speaking, could not prevail, and he became, in the words of his already-quoted panegyrist, Rev. Benjamin Woodbridge:

A star that in our Eastern England rose,  
Thence hurried by the blast of stupid foes.

He reached Boston in 1633, and was soon as much of a pope as New England could tolerate. His scholarship, which must have been great, was applauded, his piety and strength of character were extolled, his coquetting with the seductive antinomianism of Mrs. Hutchinson was pardoned, and he was flattered by seeing his observance of Saturday evening as part of the Sabbath become a universal custom. He seems to have been, through his saintly appearance, a terror to evildoers, and his normal day's labour of twelve hours must have stimulated the quaint but true scholars of the provincial town. Unfortunately his example stimulated them along more questionable lines. Conspicuous among his nearly fifty published works were controversial books that were certainly wanting in the virtue of tolerance. His principal opponent, Roger Williams, although now equally unread with Cotton, is held to have proved that the latter's "tenent" was indeed "bloody," while Cotton's best-known book, *The Bloody Tenent Washed and Made White in the Blood of the Lamb*, is assumed to have failed to justify its title. No one, who is wise, will undertake to disturb the world's verdict or to read Cotton's defence of the singing of psalms, his comments upon the Song of Songs—far-fetched

to a marvellous degree as some of them are—or any other of his methodical treatises. He was a famous man who gave his name to a still more eminent grandson, and was a foil to a greater opponent. There have been worse fates.

Passing from John Cotton to ROGER WILLIAMS is like passing from monotonous plains to the deep, ever-changing ocean. Mobility superimposed upon constancy might be taken as the formula of Williams, if any man, much less a great one, could be included in a formula. Like his friend and contemporary John Milton, he had a way of making determined enemies and devoted friends; like Milton, he has been the subject of much controversy from which his fame has emerged triumphant. Inferior to Milton both in character and in genius, he is in some respects a more engaging personality, and in his grasp upon the principle of toleration in matters of conscience he deserves even more veneration from posterity than the author of *Areopagitica*. It is true, as Mr. John Morley has contended, that obscure sectaries had argued the case for toleration a century before Williams, and that “the ideas and practices of Amsterdam and Leyden had perhaps a wider influence than either colonial exiles or home-bred controversialists, in gradually producing a political school committed to freedom of conscience.” But it is equally true that men have always longed to associate great achievements with the names of great individuals, and surely no apostle of toleration ever pleaded more eloquently in his sufferings and his writings combined than Roger Williams. His co-religionists, the Baptists, and the citizens of the little State he founded have abundant

special reasons to keep his memory green, but the whole human race has a deeper reason. Nor is the student of literature without obligations to him, however infrequently they are acknowledged.

Of his varied life only a few salient facts may be given. He was an obscure Londoner, born about 1607, who obtained in some way the favour of Sir Edward Coke, and was educated at the Charterhouse and Pembroke College, Cambridge. He took orders, but looked up to Cotton and Hooker rather than to Laud, and thus found it convenient to land at Boston in 1631. His troubles as a "heretic" with the authorities of Massachusetts and Plymouth need not be detailed; but it may be as well to remark that a man of his temperament would doubtless be more or less an object of suspicion in any orthodox, provincial community of to-day. Perhaps his Anabaptist proclivities might have been longer borne with had he not meddled with politics in behalf of the Indians, for whom he had contracted a deep sympathy that was to lead to many good results. Unfortunately it did not seem desirable to the Puritans to have their charter attacked, and sympathy with savage foes is tolerated only when they have practically ceased to be dangerous. When, to crown all, Williams asserted that no human being or power had the right to intermeddle in matters of conscience, he laid the axe at the roots of theocratic government and became a public enemy to every logical upholder of the Massachusetts system. Ecclesiastical censure not daunting him, legal expulsion and attempted arrest followed. Posterity sympathizes with the fugitive who made his way in an inclement season to the wigwams of his savage friends;



but the persecuting saints undoubtedly thought that they were doing God service.

The founding of Providence Plantation dates from June, 1636, and from this time the character and career of Williams assume nobler proportions. His relations with his fellow-colonists throughout a long life that terminated in 1684 were thoroughly creditable and in many respects inspiringly beautiful. With the Indians he maintained an intercourse as charming and beneficial, perhaps, as that of Eliot, and as deserving of note as that of William Penn. Yet he displayed no malice toward the neighbouring colonists that had expelled him, for he used his influence over the Indians in the interest of peace and of the whites. Nor was he without friends in Massachusetts and Connecticut. Among his most constant correspondents were John Winthrop and the latter's son, John Winthrop the younger, once famous both as a governor of Connecticut and as an alchemist-physician who became an early member of the Royal Society.

Williams's entrance into literature dates from 1643, when he went to England to secure a charter. In that year he published at London his *Key into the Language of America*, which is said to have philological value as a phrase-book, and is certainly an interesting compilation. Its chapters consist of observations, usually on Indian customs, lists of phrases grouped under such heads as salutation, travel, the weather, and concluding poems, generally in three stanzas. Nothing about the book is dry save the phrases. The author's fine character shines out and his independence is made manifest by his frequent com-

parisons of Indian and white man to the disadvantage of the latter.

The very Indian boys can give  
To many Stars their name,  
And know their course, and therein do  
Excel the English tame.

Williams himself during his first stay in England was not unmindful of the philanthropic lessons scattered through his book; for he helped Parliament to solve the problem of supplying fuel to the suffering poor of London. He looked out for his own reputation also by publishing (1644) an answer to a letter, written by Cotton some six years before but just printed, setting forth the causes that had led Massachusetts to banish the founder of Rhode Island. Then he took higher ground as a friend of liberty by addressing to Parliament his *Queries of Highest Consideration*, a tract in which he argued strongly against a national church and in favour of freedom of conscience. The latter great tenet was speedily made the subject of a treatise, issued anonymously, and bearing the appropriate title *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for the Cause of Conscience*. Two editions were soon wanted of a book that would be forbidding to modern readers even if it were not in dialogue form. Yet in an age of theological controversy the long speeches of Truth and Peace, couched in a sonorous style not unworthy at times of Milton, were doubtless interesting, and many readable selections may be extracted from them. It is needless to add that, all things considered, nothing could well be nobler or broader-spirited than Williams's way of envisaging his subject. It exasperated Cotton, however, who published

his famous reply in 1647. Williams, by this time back in New England, at once returned to the charge, but his voluminous answer did not get into print until his second visit to England (1652). *The Bloody Tenent Made yet more Bloody by Mr. Cotton's Endeavour to Wash it White* is doubtless the most powerful of its author's writings, but it suffers, as Milton's *Eikonoklastes* does, from the fact that its form was determined by the adversary's line of argument. It suffers, too, from the fact that ours is not a leisurely age capable of indefinite wading through print.

Williams's second visit to England produced one or two other publications, but for many years thereafter he seems not to have cared to incur the labours of authorship. He continued, however, to write interesting letters, with the result that his correspondence, although it fills a very thick quarto volume, is perhaps more safely to be recommended to latter-day readers than any of his treatises—certainly more safely than the ponderous tome entitled *George Fox Digged out of his Burrowes* (Boston, 1676), in which the veteran, with less than his usual charity, detailed the arguments he had advanced in public discussions with three prominent Quakers. Many of Williams's letters deal with Indian matters, and may hence repel some readers, but any one who appreciates noble appeals for civic harmony can afford to read the epistles addressed on several occasions to the citizens of Providence. The more strictly private letters are also worth reading, while the appeal to Governor Endicott, published with *The Bloody Tenent Made yet More Bloody*, sums up with fair completeness the arguments for toleration that



form the main basis of its writer's fame. Space is wanting for the citation of passages that will give an adequate idea of this great apostle's really notable powers of style, but it is impossible to forbear making one extract from his correspondence. It shall be taken from a letter to John Winthrop the younger, dated February 6, 1660:

But how should we expect that the streams of blood should stop among the dregs of mankind when the bloody issues flow so fresh and fearfully among the finest and most refined sons of men and sons of God. We have not only heard of the four northern nations, Dania, Swedia, Anglia, and Belgium, all Protestants, (heretics and dogs, with the Pope, &c.) last year tearing and devouring one another, in the narrow straits and eminent high passages and turns of the sea and world; but we also have a sound of the Presbyterians' rage new burst out into flames of war from Scotland, and the independent and sectarian army provoked again to new appeals to God, and engagements against them. Thus, while this last Pope hath plied with sails and oars, and brought all his Popish sons to peace, except Portugal, and brought in his grand engineers, the Jesuits, again to Venice, after their long just banishment, we Protestants are woefully disposed to row backward, and bring our sails aback-stays, and provoke the holy, jealous Lord, who is a consuming fire, to kindle again those fires from Rome and hell, which formerly consumed (in Protestant countries) so many precious servants of God. The late renowned Oliver, confessed to me, in close discourse about the Protestants' affairs, etc., that he yet feared great persecutions to the Protestants from the Romanists, before the downfall of the Papacy.

If it was the function of Roger Williams to dispense balm; it was the function of the Rev. NATHANIEL WARD (1578(?)–1652(?)) to throw vitriol. Ward was a thorough "original," whose career was almost as interesting as his character. The son of a distinguished Puritan preacher, he first practised law and then became something of a traveller, making notable acquaintances, among them the

infant Prince Rupert, whom he held in his arms at an age more propitious to cooing than to round swearing. While abroad he became a clergyman. Returning to England, he stood the tyranny of Laud until 1634, when he emigrated. He took chief charge of the church at Agawam (Ipswich), but soon gave it up on account of his health and was made the main compiler of the colonial code, the *Body of Liberties* (1641). Some years later he began to write the book that has kept his name alive—a little volume dealing with the confusion of English politics, the new-fangled doctrine of freedom of conscience, the general decay of manners, and the worthlessness of women. These cheerful topics gave full scope to his satiric power, his whimsicality, his quaint scholarship, his varied experience, his ultra-Puritanic narrowness and strenuosity. When published in 1646–47, the diatribe was furnished with the following title-page: “*The Simple Cobbler of Agawam in America*. Willing to help mend his native country, lamentably tattered, both in the upper-leather and sole, with all the honest stitches he can take. And as willing never to be paid for his work by the old English wonted pay. *It is his trade to patch all the year long, gratis*. Therefore I pray gentlemen keep back your purses. By *Theodore de la Guard*. ‘*In rebus arduis ac tenui spe, fortissima quaeque consilia tutissima sunt*.’ Cic. In English:

When boots and shoes are torn up to the lefts,  
 Cobblers must thrust their awls up to the hefts;  
 This is no time to fear *Apelles’ gramm*:  
*Ne sutor quidem ultra cripidam,*” etc.

This title is almost enough to give a fair idea of Ward’s style. His book ran through four editions in a year, and,

being far from ponderous, is easily perused to-day. Perhaps, as he soon returned to England and held a living there till his death, he is strictly to be regarded as a British rather than an American writer, but his eccentricities were doubtless sharpened in the wilderness, and we cannot give up without a struggle one of the few interesting books produced on our soil during the seventeenth century. Its hybrid style can be better judged from an example than from any description.

"I honour the woman," says our satirist, "that can honour herself with her attire; a good text always deserves a fair margin; I am not much offended if I see a trim far trimmer than she that wears it. In a word, whatever Christianity or Civility will allow, I can afford with London measure: but when I hear a nugiperous gentle-dame inquire what dress the Queen is in this week, what the nudiustertian fashion of the Court; with egg to be in it in all haste, whatever it be; I look at her as the very gizzard of a trifle, the product of a quarter of a cipher, the epitome of Nothing, fitter to be kicked, if she were of a kickable substance, than either honoured or humoured."

After such a passage we can afford to take our leave of a writer who seems a composite of Simonides of Amorgos, Diogenes, Sir Thomas Browne, Torquemada, and other incongruous personages, and was surely as unique a specimen of humanity as ever Old or New England produced.

Most of the other divines of the immigration period while, perhaps, superior in learning and at least in strenuous piety to their native-born successors, are not intrin-



sically important to the historian of literature. Of the noble John Eliot (1604–90) it seems worth while, however, to say that although his style may be quite destitute of charm, the sincerity and sweetness of the man shine through it. Sunlight is what one associates with this apostle, and with at least the titles of his books: *The Day-Breaking, if not the Sun-Rising of the Gospel with the Indians of New England; The Light appearing more and more towards the Perfect Day*. Eliot certainly used all the sunlight and much of the torchlight of a long life in deeds of mercy and love, in great though often misguided labours as a translator, a catechiser, and a preacher, in philanthropic service as a mediator between the savages and his own people. It may be doubted, however, whether if he were labouring in God's vineyard to-day he would be often able to declare of his more civilized hearers as he could of his Indian congregation, "None of them slept sermon or derided God's messenger."

Derided God's messenger? Was such a thing—for the implication is plain—possible in early New England? It was, if we may take the testimony of the divines themselves, nor was it unnatural in such a galling period of spiritual despotism. The greatest descendant of the Puritans was psychologically accurate and historically correct when he based his romance on a sensual crime in which a clergyman shared. But the spirit rebelled as well as the flesh. The end of the century was filled with lamentations about the old order's changing—lamentations that had a more substantial basis than is usually the case. A more liberal spirit was in the air; orthodoxy

was ceasing to be the prime consideration of life; the sons were more carnal-minded than their fathers.

A single illustrious family, that of the Mathers, represents in three generations the declining fortunes of the theocracy. The grandfather, Richard Mather (1596–1669), after a thoroughly successful career as a minister of the Word died, leaving four clerical sons, pillars, as he thought, of Christ's Church both in Old and in New England. His famous son, INCREASE MATHER (1639–1723), did not die until he had seen Benjamin Colman, pastor of the Brattle Street Church of Boston, which had been organized in opposition to the "Cambridge Platform," recognised as one of the foremost divines of New England, and until he himself had lost his fight to retain Harvard College under orthodox control. Increase's son, the still more famous COTTON MATHER (1663–1728), lived to see his father and himself the objects of cabals and slanders, the presidency of Harvard forced out of his father's grasp and kept out of his own constantly and vexatiously, his services for orthodoxy in the witchcraft crisis regarded by many contemporaries as crimes against humanity, and finally the genius of his family, re-enforced as it had been in his own case by that of his grandfather, John Cotton, dying out in an exemplary son, Samuel, whose biography of his great progenitor is rightly characterized by Prof. Barrett Wendell as "probably the most colourless book in the English language."

Professor Wendell's own life of Cotton Mather is very far from being colourless. It is such a thorough study that little remains to be said about its main theme except by way of repetition. He has fairly exonerated the

younger Mather from most of the odium that has attached to him on account of the persecution of the witches, and whether or not we accept his subtle explanation of the origin of popular frenzies of the kind, we must conclude that the Salem delusion was only the most disastrous of the similar outbreaks of the century. In their firm belief in witchcraft the Mathers were but illustrating a psychological law. When a prejudice is waning or a delusion losing ground, its defenders become more vociferous and not infrequently support it with great learning and thorough conscientiousness. Both Mathers were recalcitrants, and the younger was especially given to asceticism of the type that produces visions and other spiritual ecstasies. They were scholars and formalists who dwelt much on the testimony of the ancients. The age of deduction still held full sway in America; scepticism even about witchcraft seemed to assail the foundations of orthodoxy. Yet the Mathers, especially Increase, who was in England during the first part of the witchcraft troubles and kept out of them as well as he could after he returned, were on the whole reasonable persecutors, if the phrase may be allowed; for they insisted upon careful scrutiny of evidence, and indeed opposed that so-called "spectral evidence" on which many persons were convicted. That the younger Mather was imprudent in continuing to investigate cases after the delusion had subsided, that he did not profit from Judge Sewall's example and confess his grievous errors, can hardly be said to prove the charge brought by his enemies that he fostered the popular excitement in order that he might enhance the waning power of the theocracy. He was full of spirit-



ual pride as well as of personal vanity of a lower order, but he was at bottom a good and deeply pious man who had the misfortune to hold by the past rather than by the future. He was sincerely grieved by the attacks made upon him, and he was a much greater man than any of his foes, for, although inferior to them in clear-sightedness, he was manifestly their superior in imagination and emotional fervour. Unfortunately he belonged to a decaying dynasty and his powers were devoted to ends that were bound to result in failure. From this point of view he becomes one of the most pathetic figures in American history.

Such pathos does not attach to Increase Mather, because, while he failed in theological and educational matters, he did not fail in politics. His services as the agent of Massachusetts at the court of William and Mary cannot be detailed here, but they should be remembered as giving premonition of the sturdy patriotism and resistance to tyranny to be displayed by later New Englanders—especially by a still greater colonial agent, Benjamin Franklin. Indeed, Increase Mather may be pronounced one of the strongest and most interesting men produced in the American colonies, and there are few more readable books in our early literature than the quaint volume entitled *Parentator* (1724), which his more famous son, who idolized him with a most beautiful affection, devoted to his memory. Of his own publications, which are said to count no less than one hundred and thirty-six titles, the most interesting is probably the *Remarkable Providences* of 1684. This is in reality a compilation of stories, often absurd enough, collected to prove

the interference of Providence in human affairs within the memory of living men. Its proper title, *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, is rarely allowed it; but whatever name be given it, the book itself is full of interest and amusement for any reader who desires to know how crudely uncritical the minds of his seventeenth-century ancestors apparently were. Somewhat the same end is served by the *Cases of Conscience* of 1693, a treatise that furthermore illustrates the elder Mather's wide reading and his by no means feeble style, which some readers will prefer to the more pedantic style of the author of the *Magnalia*.

But the better-known son in a way outshone his father in their lifetime, and he still has a greater reputation. Certainly he was a more thorough-going sacerdotalist, ecstatic visionary, and pedant-scholar. He represents the culmination of the Brahmin caste, and if most typical and most extravagant are epithets that may consistently be applied to one and the same person, and if, taken together, they may be considered equivalent to greatest, then Cotton Mather is the greatest of seventeenth-century New Englanders. Even from childhood he was trained and trained himself to be great. He was a prodigy of scholastic learning and throughout his life prided himself upon his ability speedily to exhaust all that a new book had to give him. Before he had reached his majority he was a pedant; a year after reaching it he was made his father's assistant in the pastorate of the North Church, in Boston, and was exposed to what is even now probably the worst species of adulation. There is no real reason to deny his underlying sincerity and piety; yet his egotism

and artificiality left their trail even upon his prayers and visions. He was as unattractive a lover as can well be imagined, but we cannot bring ourselves to censure him since his later life was very pathetic. The second of his three wives was insane and plagued him sorely. His children also died rapidly, and one of his sons was a reprobate. Hence we may conclude that while it was absurd for him to have a pious thought every time he coughed or washed his hands, he, nevertheless, had as many serious uses for his piety as most men have in this troubled life. When we remember, too, his public disappointments and the malignity of his enemies, we grow indisposed to criticise him harshly—at least, as a man. It was well that such a type of ecclesiastic should pass away, that such a pedantic, even if encyclopedic scholar should cease to have emulators, that such a fecund writer should seem to posterity worthy rather of amused wonder than of admiration; but, after all, one puts down a life of Cotton Mather with the feeling that he deserved more sympathy than he got, whether or not he was conscious of needing it.

But it is chiefly to Cotton Mather the writer that our few words should be devoted. Yet what are a few words in connection with an author whose writings run up to or pass the prodigious number of four hundred titles, and include voluminous diaries and treatises that are still in manuscript? “Until one actually inspects the documents,” says Professor Wendell, “it seems incredible that in forty-five years any single human being could have penned so many words as we thus see to have come from the hand of one of the busiest ministers, one of the most



insatiable scholars and readers, and one of the most active politicians whom America has ever known." No wonder he has been styled a "literary behemoth," or that extracts from the catalogue of his writings often do service for criticism thereof. It must be immediately added, however, that such titles as *Boanerges: A Short Essay to Strengthen the Impressions Produced by Earthquakes* and *Orphanotrophium; or, Orphans well Provided for in the Divine Providence* serve some, at least, of the purposes of criticism. They at once place their author in the Fantastic School, where he holds, for America at least, a sovereign and unassailable position. This is much like reigning in Milton's Limbo or else in the realm of Chaos and Old Night, but such has not been Mather's actual fate, for, despite his pedantry, his quips and crotchets, he managed to write three or four interesting and important books.

One of these, his *Parentator*, has been already mentioned; another, *Bonifacius*, etc., or, more simply, *Essays To Do Good*, was long popular and, at least, influenced Benjamin Franklin to be charitable by system; in a third, the famous *Magnalia*, Mather did for the early New England saints not so much what Tasso did for the Crusaders as what Hakluyt and Purchas did for the Elizabethan seamen.

The *Magnalia Christi Americana; or, the Ecclesiastical History of New England, from its First Planting, in the Year 1620, unto the Year of our Lord 1698* was begun about 1693, finished with characteristic thanksgiving in 1697, and published, after delays and discouragements, in 1702. It was not merely a history; it was a

plea for the old orthodoxy against the new heterodoxy; hence its author's prayers and vigils and misgivings about its fate. That fate has been on the whole propitious. Historians may style the book a chaos of fables and blunders, and few readers may feel any affection toward it, but it remains a literary landmark, a great monument of a great age, a colossal boulder left behind by the retreating glacier of Calvinism—anything one will, provided it be something commanding and representative.

To attempt to describe it adequately and briefly is a hopeless undertaking. The original folio contained 788 pages; the second edition of 1820, printed at Hartford, in two volumes, contained 1168 octavo pages of by no means large type. Of its seven books and numerous parts and chapters, of its minor divisions of one sort and another, of its title-pages, its inserted epitaphs and elegies, no one can form a good idea without going to the book itself, which may be dipped into with the same sort of pleasure with which one dips into Burton's *Anatomy*. As for its contents, it must suffice to say that the author is now analyst, now biographer, mainly an apologist, and always loyal to the traditions of his caste. Few early worthies, whether divines or magistrates, escape commemoration more or less elaborate, and sometimes, as in the case of the doughty governor Sir William Phips, an adherent of the Mather party, the biography possesses genuine interest to modern readers. A whole book is given to Harvard, another to the decrees and actions of the synods, another to Indian wars. Nor would the ponderous author have been himself or his father's son if he had not col-

lected a goodly number of "Wonderful Providences" and "Remarkable Occurrences."

To select typical passages from so voluminous a writer is not an easy task; but perhaps the following from the *Parentator* will fairly illustrate Mather's prevailing traits of pedantry and fantastic quaintness.

After a little plain speaking about a certain misfortune that attended Mrs. Katharine Holt, Richard Mather's first wife, her grandson continued: ". . . it might have been said of this Gentlewoman, she was the Mother of *Seven Sons*. But without *That*, and allowing one of the *Seven* to have so disappeared, the Number of the Sons, which God bestow'd on this Happy Pair, amounted unto *Six*: whereof one Dyed in his childhood: and *Four* Proved Useful, and Faithful and Famous Ministers of the Gospel. *Increase* was the *Youngest* of them: Whom his Father called so, not with Regard unto any of the Celebrated *Names* sakes in Antiquity, whereof tho' there were some *no better than they should be*, yet One at least, who is mentioned in the Conclusion of the *second Epistle to Timothy*, has a good reputation in the Church of God; but because of the never-to-be-forgotten *Increase*, of every sort, wherewith GOD favoured the Country, about the time of his nativity. And if he might have had an *Hebrew* instead of an English name, I suppose it must have been a *Joseph*, which is of the like Significancy. Had he been Indisputably a *seventh son*, yet he would not have countenanced the Foolish, Profane, Magical Whimsey of the Silly People which furnishes the *Seventh Son*, with I know not what Uncommon Powers; 'Twas among the *Vulgar Errors* always derided

with him. However, we shall hear of *Strange Things* done by him, and for him. I am apt to think, some Readers will anon say, *We have seen Strange things to Day."*

In 1724 Benjamin Franklin paid a visit to Cotton Mather and received from him a bit of useful advice. If the older man could have foreseen that Franklin would profit by it in a utilitarian rather than in a spiritual way, and that the transition from spiritualism to utilitarianism would represent on the whole a permanent change of view on the part both of his beloved New England and of the world, he would probably not have let his young visitor go without sundry exhortations and pessimistic prophecies. But he would merely have been kicking against the pricks. The minds and spirits of men who do not belong to a decadent race cannot remain stationary or be continuously active along one set of lines. The enthusiasm, the spirituality, the dynastic and ecclesiastical loyalties of the seventeenth century had to give place to the matter-of-fact utilitarianism and the struggles for popular freedom in religion and politics of the eighteenth. Theology in the person of Cotton Mather gave an unconscious benediction to science in the person of Benjamin Franklin. Both types of mind have their partisans to-day; but it is catholic to endeavour to hold the balance between them even. It is catholic also to acknowledge that although the century we are just leaving produced in America little literature of intrinsic value, it yet produced able writers suited to the needs of their age and a body of writings out of which a finer literature was certain to be evolved.



## CHAPTER V

### LATER COLONIAL VERSE (1701-64)

THE period of about seventy-five years stretching from the accession of William and Mary to the passage of the Stamp Act differs in many respects from the period of nearly equal length measured from the foundation of Plymouth to the joint reign which is such a landmark in the history of constitutional government. Externally, for New England and New York at least, it is a period of struggles against the French and Indians, of efforts on the part of the enemy to surround the colonists in such a way as to shut them in between the Alleghany Mountains and the Atlantic, and finally of the complete overthrow of the French power in America. Internally, it is a period of growth in population and wealth and, in New England, of considerable mental and moral change. We have already seen how the Puritan theocracy began to wane before the close of the seventeenth century. No such change could come to the Middle Colonies, for religion had not been paramount there; but the British element of the population gradually predominated over the other stocks, and the rich soil, the abundant water-ways, and the central position of the region gave it on the whole greater importance than was possessed by the somewhat

isolated New England. Philadelphia became and remained until the end of the century the most prosperous town on the continent. The Southern Colonies also suffered no marked change, for they continued to consist of aggregations of plantations owned by gentlemen and worked by slaves. In population, indeed, especially after the early troubles in both Carolinas were settled and Georgia was founded (1733), the South surpassed each of the other sections, but the presence of large numbers of negroes and the lack of diversified occupations kept the region somewhat in the background until the final struggle with the French and the revolution against Great Britain set a premium upon those qualities of leadership of which aristocracies are never destitute.

It should hardly surprise us to find that the literature of this period, apart from the work of Franklin and Edwards, is not intrinsically so interesting as that of the century preceding. New England, which had produced most of the writers and books we have had occasion to notice, had lost much of its imaginative fervour and was becoming more concerned with cargoes—often of slaves and of materials for the manufacture of rum—than with sermons. There was little or no loss in moral sturdiness, as the Revolution was to prove, but until the religious revival known as the Great Awakening, and even after, there was a distinct loss of that spirit of other-worldliness, of God-intoxication, which had given a tinge of poetry to the annals of the earlier generations. Petty wars and shrewd mercantile ventures could not inspire a literature of any great value. Nor could the conditions of life in the Middle and Southern Colonies produce this

desirable result, even though the development of urban society in Philadelphia did encourage Franklin and a few of his satellites to use their pens. Quarrels between royal governors and colonial assemblies, squabbles over boundaries, endeavours to defend charters, evade the Navigation Acts, and issue paper money were not so provocative of song as the wrath of Achilles had been in the early days of a more favoured land. After the pirates were put down, the pioneer and the Indian were almost the only picturesque objects in sight, but a period of more than sixty years was to elapse before Cooper would create Natty Bumpo and Chingachgook. Governor Spotswood and his escort of Cavalier explorers inspire our imaginations to-day as we picture them, Balboas upon a small scale, looking down from the Blue Ridge into the smiling Valley of Virginia, but they found no contemporary poet to give them fame. Instead, if history may be trusted, the gallant old governor found a suspicious and ungrateful king who wanted no new order of Knights of the Horseshoe created in the wilderness.

The allusion to George I reminds us, however, that an even more distinct change had come over literature in the mother-country. When Captain John Smith was writing his *True Relation* Shakespeare was probably writing *Antony and Cleopatra*. When Cotton Mather was writing *Parentator* Pope was editing Shakespeare. Shakespeare and Smith had something in common, so in point of style had Smith and Mather; how much had Pope and Shakespeare in common? As we have noted, a minute study of colonial writers shows that as new literary schools and masters developed in England, traces

of their influence began to be seen across the Atlantic. Waller and Dryden, directly or indirectly, helped to train colonial poets, and later their places were taken by Pope and, alas! Blackmore. But no such marked difference of spirit and quality can be discovered between colonial writers of the seventeenth century and of the first half of the eighteenth as can be observed between the British writers contemporary with Ben Jonson in his old age and those contemporary with Gray in his youth. There had been change in America; there had been revolution in England. Historians have remarked that John Bull, the stolid, is in the main a creation of the century that followed the restoration of the Stuarts; Brother Jonathan, the shrewd, may be discovered in such men as Judge Sewall and Franklin, but he is more especially a creation of the century that followed the American Revolution. It is claimed that the colonists who resisted the Stamp Act were nearer in spirit to the Englishmen who resisted the levying of ship-money than were the average home subjects of George III. This is probably true, as the patriots themselves recognised, and it is true not merely because there was no great break in the continuity of colonial life, but also because there was no great renunciation of ideals. The acceptance of Charles II as king was perhaps a political necessity; but the contemptuous rejection of the ideals of Milton was paid for by a religious and political deterioration, only partly neutralized by the labours of Wesley and the lessons taught by the American Revolution. There was little change of ideals in the Southern and Middle Colonies, and little deliberately conscious renunciation of them in New Eng-



land, hence it was possible, in politics at least, for the American provincials to make an ordered and consistent advance not possible to their British contemporaries. To regret the Revolution that was the result of this advance or to imagine that it hinged upon small points that might have been modified in the interest of harmony is, to say the least, unphilosophical. It would be equally unphilosophical to be surprised at not finding in rural America of the eighteenth century a literature at all comparable in merit to that produced, chiefly under urban influences, in England—a literature of satires and epistles and pastorals and elegies composed upon Roman models, of plays mainly borrowed from the French, and of journalistic essays and pamphlets, original enough, but chiefly adapted to the tastes and needs of a sophisticated society. Yet there was an attempt in America at a literature of this sort, and we may now examine the poetical portion of it, with the remark that the task of tracing the British affiliations of these colonial bards is pleasanter than the mere reading of their works. Probably it is also more important.

We took leave of New England poetry with the name of Wigglesworth, and of New England prose with that of Cotton Mather. The fact that Mather preached Wigglesworth's funeral sermon and wrote his epitaph, and the further fact that the *Magnalia* contained not a little verse composed by its author and his friends, will perhaps justify us in returning for a moment to a man and a book that stand on the dividing line of two centuries. The elegies contained in the *Magnalia* are, so far as their substance is concerned, almost entirely products of the long-defunct

Fantastic School of Quarles and his peers; but in their rhythm and metre, and, to a certain extent, their diction, they seem to show the influence of Dryden. The great satirist is not, however, Mather's favourite bard, this honour being reserved for Sir Richard Blackmore, who is styled "incomparable" and is quoted at least twice—that is, seemingly, as often as Milton! Mather appears to have corresponded with the notorious physician-poet as well as with Dr. Watts. Perhaps the influence of the clerical bard is responsible for the surprising simplicity to be found in some of Mather's own verses—especially those on his wife Abigail, which charm in a negative way through their lack of the rotund extravagance and bathos of the typical memorial verse of the period—such verse, for example, as Mather himself addressed to the memory of Governor Phips:

Now lest *ungrateful brands* we should incur,  
Your salary we'll pay in *tears*, *Great Sir*.

But while Mather is our supreme Fantastic in the realms of prose, he must give place in those of verse to the Rev. Nicholas Noyes (1647–1717), of Salem, who succumbed to the witchcraft delusion and to the almost worse one of imagining that punning is the chief end of man. Noyes glorified God and his fellow-mortals in execrable conceits. One of his most remarkable effusions was addressed to a friend afflicted with the stone, but it is worth noting that he nowhere surpassed the immortal use of that disease made by Cowley in his ode to Dr. Scarborough. A less offensive exhibition of his talents was given by Noyes in his elegy on the Rev. Joseph Green, whose name seems to have served as a basis for nine pages of puns.

Still our poet had a certain amount of originality and quaintness of expression that make him more readable than many of his brother versifiers. These lines, from the "Consolatory Poem" to Cotton Mather, are not unamusing:

Where canker'd breasts with envy broil,  
And smooth tongues are but dipt in oil;  
And Cain's club only doth lie by  
For want of opportunity.  
Yea, who would live among catarrhs  
Contagions, pains, and strifes, and wars,  
That might go up above the stars,  
And live in health, and peace, and bliss,  
Had in that world, but wish'd in this?

The popular ballad entitled *Lovewell's Fight* leads one to believe that the time needed in New England to evolve an *Iliad* or a *Chevy Chase*, would have been immense. It is uncertain whether it was the recognition of this fact that prompted Major-General, Chief Justice, and Governor Roger Wolcott, of Connecticut, to write an artificial epic. This he called *A Brief Account of the Agency of the Honorable John Winthrop, Esquire, in the Court of King Charles II, A. D. 1662, when he obtained a Charter for the Colony of Connecticut*. It is strange that he did not call it *The Winthropiad*. It is not so strange that this homespun production of fifteen hundred lines and the rest of his *Meditations* (1725) have been long forgotten save by antiquaries. If his epic did not prove that the self-education which will enable a man of strong character to fill public posts will also suffice to make him a poet, it nevertheless proved one important fact in an indisputable manner. It proved that the influence of Alexander Pope

had come to America to make a long sojourn. Pope's influence has been responsible for a good deal of sad stuff in the way of metrical composition, but probably for nothing worse than the elaborate speech in Wolcott's poem, in which Winthrop describes to Charles II the planting and early history of Connecticut. What is one to say of a poet who makes a ship's captain, during the approach of a storm, exclaim to his crew—

Now all from safe recumbency arise!

Wolcott's masterpiece was saved from the contamination of much public applause; not so the doggerel verses of the Rev. John Seccomb. This worthy, while studying at Harvard, in 1730, wrote, on the death of a menial employee of the college, some humorous stanzas which so pleased Governor Belcher that he sent them to England, where they appeared both in *The Gentleman's* and in *The London Magazine*. Not unnaturally, since pieces of the kind, such, for example, as Dr. Sheridan's inventory of Swift's possessions, were regarded as mere humorous scribbles, this officially transmitted effusion seemed to British readers fairly representative of contemporary American culture. Yet what was to be said of the opening or, indeed, any of the stanzas of "Father Abbey's Will"—

To my dear wife,  
My joy and life  
I freely now do give her  
My whole estate,  
With all my plate,  
Being just about to leave her.



My tub of soap,  
A long cart-rope,  
A frying-pan and kettle,  
An ashes pail,  
A threshing flail,  
An iron-wedge and beetle.

Having unconsciously done his best with this and perhaps a companion composition to damn his country's literature for all time, Seccomb remained comparatively silent for the rest of his long life. In pleasing contrast with him stands Mrs. Jane Turell, who inherited the poetical talents of her father, the distinguished Dr. Benjamin Colman, and, like him, had a fondness for scriptural subjects and owned the sway of Pope. She was catholic enough, too, to admire Waller, on whom she wrote a glowing eulogy, praising his politics as well as his poetry, which is remarkable in a fair Puritan, and she even went so far as to apostrophize Sir Richard Blackmore as follows:

Blackmore, thou wondrous bard! whose name inspires  
My glowing breast to imitate thy fires.

One feels a sympathy with Mrs. Bradstreet, labouring under the influence of Sylvester; what must one feel for an amiable young woman labouring under the influence of Blackmore? It is true that in one of her poems she expresses the wish to burn with Sappho's "noble fire" ("but not like her for faithless man expire"), and to rival great "Orinda's fame"; but it is to be feared that her intimacy with Blackmore has brought a blight upon her and her works. Her life, at any rate, was exemplary, and, although she died early, she did not expire on account of any faithless man, for her husband, Rev. Eben-

ezer Turell, published her memoirs and poetical remains the very year she died (1735).

The slight glimpses we have thus far had of the colonial verse of the early eighteenth century are probably enough to show us that more secular notes are creeping in and that the poets, while still imitators, are not specially belated. It is equally clear, however, that there is no good reason for dwelling long upon them, or for even mentioning their names, save in exceptional cases.

No discussion of colonial poetry would be complete, however, that did not consider briefly two Boston gentlemen who were highly renowned among their fellow-citizens for their metrical accomplishments. These were the Rev. Mather Byles (1707-88) and his rival in wit, Joseph Green (1706-80), a prosperous merchant of a type that became rather common in the New England town during the eighteenth century. Byles was an inveterate jester, but was taken very seriously in his literary capacity. He took himself seriously, if we may judge from the epistle he sent, along with some of his early effusions in verse, to the great dictator of English letters, Alexander Pope. In the year of the latter's death *A Collection of Poems by Several Hands* was published at Boston with the patriotic purpose of placing Byles near or on the throne of poetry. To one of these enthusiastic contributors he was

Harvard's honour and New England's hope

who bade fair "to rise and sing and rival Pope." Truth to say, his description of the Last Judgment under the appropriate title of "The Conflagration" did not deserve

to supersede Wigglesworth's masterpiece, in fact, scarcely surpassed in excellence the epic strains of Roger Wolcott. His "Elegy addressed to Governor Belcher on the Death of his Lady" was little or no better, and it was only when he attempted simple hymn stanzas that he achieved an even moderate success. Nor did he in this form sing the praises of the "God of Tempest and Earthquake" as well as his British contemporary Bishop Lowth had done when a boy of fourteen. Yet Byles was something more than a bad poet and a humorous parson with a big wig; he was a moving preacher, and the way he cowed his congregation when they remonstrated against his loyalty to George III proved that he was in some respects a strong man.

Probably Byles's best performance was a hymn he wrote on a voyage which Governor Belcher entrapped him into undertaking without the proper equipment of a hymn-book. Byles supplied the needed hymn, which may be judged from its concluding stanza:

Each various scene, or day or night,  
Lord, points to thee our nourished soul;  
Thy glories fix our whole delight;  
So the touched needle courts the pole.

This voyage and its extemporized hymn afforded Green an opportunity to indulge his not inconsiderable talent for parody. But clever as Green was, the figure he cuts in any collection of colonial verse proves clearly the literary sterility of the times. Such skits should have been ephemeral. He is best remembered, if at all, for his facetious "Mournful Lamentation for the Sad and Deplorable Death of Mr. Old Tenor"—a squib on the paper currency of the time, which has been paralleled in our own

period by some fairly well-known lines on a Confederate note. He also imitated Gray, and relieved his friend Byles of the duty, by writing an elegy on the latter's favourite cat. It was a secularized Boston, indeed, that was soon to attract the eyes of the world as the storm-centre of the Revolution.

Even in the country towns a change of spirit was to be perceived. Yankee humour was not exactly driving out Puritan seriousness, but was overlaying it. An even more interesting figure than either Byles or Green was Nathaniel Ames of Dedham, both a physician and an inn-keeper and for many years the publisher of an almanac which certainly forestalled in some of its features Benjamin Franklin's better known production in this motley genus. Ames continued until the year of his death, 1764, to furnish his countrymen with selections from other authors, with predictions assuredly as well founded as those of Swift's victim, Partridge, and with little prose essays, a few of which are still worth reading. But he was also something of a poet who was capable of giving to his couplets more colour than one expects to find in any verse of the period. Here, for example, is the way this rural poet, who was also enough of a scientist to write a belated Cowleyan ode on the microscope, described "the waking of the sun" in his *Astronomical Diary; or an Almanac for the Year of our Lord Christ, 1739*:

And darkness with her sable mantle covers,  
Sweet stolen sports of joyful meeting lovers;  
His starry parliament, those twinkling fires,  
That sit in council whilst their Lord retires,  
Adorn the ample canopy with light,  
And sparkle on the gloomy brow of night.



These lines prepare us for remembering another physician, John Osborn of Middletown, Connecticut, whose "Whaling Song" was long popular among the hardy explorers of the Pacific. Whaling, however, was not the only phase of active life that inspired New England poets. Colonial successes in the French and Indian wars afforded more attractive themes. An increased patriotism, a national self-consciousness, becomes noticeable in the literature of the period, and this patriotism, together with an unruly bellicosity, overflows in the crude, sprawling poems of such untrained writers as John Maylem, a graduate of Harvard, who styled himself "Philo-Bellum," and a certain George Cockings.

Both were inspired by the capture of Louisburg, and in 1760 Cockings published the first edition of his heroic poem entitled *War*. He was modest enough to declare: "I don't pretend to be a first-rate poet; perhaps may never deserve the title of poet"; but he urged as an excuse for his one hundred and ninety octavo pages of couplets and of foot-notes full of minute military descriptions, the fact that his fancy had taken fire at the success of the mother-country and king he had long loved as an humble, far-away colonist. It is this fact that makes him worthy of remembrance to-day.<sup>1</sup> Yet in three years greater discord

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<sup>1</sup> Cockings, who has been severely excluded from the ranks of American poets, even by Professor Tyler and by Griswold, who often seemed to do their recruiting on the principles immortalized by Falstaff, deserves further remembrance from the fact that he is one of the earliest representatives of a class of writers of whom America has been more prolific, owing to democratic conditions, than any other country—the self-made poets who fancy themselves born, the poets whose eyes roll, if at all, in nightmares and not in a fine frenzy, who

was to reign in colonial hearts than in the voice of this strident poet.

The colonial patriotism and imitativeness that have just been emphasized are conspicuously displayed in the memorial volume published by Harvard, in 1762, and entitled *Pietas et Gratulatio Collegii Cantabrigiensis apud Nov-Anglos*. Perfunctory and extravagant mourning at the death of George II, set over against equally absurd rejoicing at the accession of George III, is especially ludicrous in view of the changed tone with which American poets soon addressed the latter monarch; but the volume is chiefly interesting to the historian of literature because it is almost if not quite the last of a series of academical tributes stretching over some two hundred years, and because it illustrates so neatly the close relations subsisting between British and American culture.

These relations are also illustrated by the verses of Dr. Benjamin Church, who contributed to the *Pietas et Gratulatio*, and shall be the last of the colonial New England poets to be dealt with here. Church was born in 1739, rose to eminence in his native Boston both as a physician and as a writer of prose and verse, unfortunately went into the Revolution as a Whig but ended as a Tory, and, like Waller, was accused of traitorous practices that led to a short imprisonment. Unlike the British poet, he did not

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help to make up what may be called the sub-literary class of writers. The number of epics produced by these worthy people who have mistaken their vocation is surprising. As remarkable as any is *The Fredoniad; or Independence Preserved—an Epic Poem of the War of 1812*, by a certain Richard Emmons, M. D., who cultivated his muse in Kentucky in 1826, and dedicated this poem, which began with a conclave in Hades, to the illustrious Lafayette.

long enjoy his regained liberty, for curiously paralleling the slightly prior fate of Falconer, the author of *The Shipwreck*, he embarked in 1776 upon a vessel that was never heard from again.

Church is best remembered, if at all, by his satire *The Times*, written just after the Stamp Act and marked by some of the vigour of the "great Churchill" apostrophized in its opening lines. Eight years before, however, he had published a poem still more interesting to the student of colonial culture. This was *The Choice—a Poem after the Manner of Mr. Pomfret*. Not only does the young Bostonian write couplets that would not be out of place in any of the later volumes of Chalmers, but he shows in almost every idea expressed that, however different provincial life might be from metropolitan, in imagination at least, the cultivated inhabitant of Boston annihilated the miles of ocean that separated him from the literary circles of London. Church wished for rural seclusion "and all the glitter of a court" despised, when a short walk along a cow-path would have brought him to open fields before he could have polished two of his couplets. He apostrophized "thy mellow Vintage, Lisbon" when he should have sung "thy potent fermentation, Jamaica." But we can forgive him his affectations, because he gives us a very good list of the writers he loved to read or else thought he ought to read. To Homer, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, Lucan, Martial, Terence, Plautus, he adds "awful Pope . . . unequal'd Bard," Milton, Addison, Lyttleton, Dryden, Young, Gay, Waller, Thomson, Tillotson, Butler, Newton, Locke. Not a word here of Cotton, Hooker, the Mathers, or even of the great

Jonathan Edwards. It is "polite," not sacred literature, that attracts the young colonial of 1757, and a majority of the writers he names would probably have occurred to the mind of any contemporary British versifier desirous of making such a list.

We must now follow to his adopted home Benjamin Franklin, the greatest of New England's sons, who was also guilty of literary imitativeness in his youth, but speedily developed into one of the most original of men. We may pause, however, long enough to note that the only poem of any consequence connected with colonial New York, *The Philosophic Solitude* (1747) of William Livingston, afterward governor of New Jersey and a statesman and historical writer of the Revolutionary Period, while not altogether lacking in merit does not surpass if it does not fall below its uninspiring model, *The Choice*, of the much-read John Pomfret, which was imitated by several other colonial bards.

Benjamin Franklin, as we have already had occasion to remark, was no poet; but some of the young associates he drew around him during his early years in Philadelphia were wont to indulge in metrical exercises. The best known of them is James Ralph, who went to England with Franklin, and there, as a fairly successful hack writer, became important in the early annals of newspaper editing. Ralph's chief title to present fame lies in the fact that, besides figuring in Franklin's *Autobiography* (not very creditably), he is mentioned twice in the *Dunciad* and once by Churchill. He had written a poem on *Night* and a squib on Pope and Swift, but the former paid him off when he wrote:



Silence, ye wolves, while Ralph to Cynthia howls,  
And makes Night hideous; answer him, ye owls.

Ralph was an anti-Popian in more ways than one, which may have stimulated the arch-poet's secretion of venom. He not only joined Thomson and Dyer in their struggle against the dominance of artificial poetry, but also exhibited many of the characteristic features of romantic verse.

The only poets of this Philadelphia group that equal Ralph in interest, slight though it be, are Thomas Godfrey (1736-63) and Nathaniel Evans (1742-67). The former was a son of the philosophical glazier of the same name mentioned in Franklin's *Autobiography*. Apprenticed to a watchmaker, he courted eternity rather than time and served the Muses, publishing in the *American Magazine* verses that were received "with great approbation." Later he became a lieutenant in the Fort Duquesne expedition of 1758, and then engaged in business in North Carolina, where he not only gave an early exhibition of the migratory habits of his countrymen, but also wrote what is seemingly the first fairly important poetic tragedy attempted by an American. This was *The Prince of Parthia*, never acted but published in 1765, two years after its author's premature death. The play has been praised by partial critics, but, while it shows a budding talent, it is thoroughly imitative in style and contains the usual elements of an Oriental plot—jealousy, lust, treason, and murder. The accompanying poems are also imitative, consisting as they do of pastorals—Lycidas and Damœtas bewail General Wolfe—love-songs, odes, and the like. The most ambitious of these pieces, "The Court of Fan-

cy," which had appeared separately, was obviously based on Chaucer's "House of Fame," and as obviously showed the influence of Collins. Yet just as clearly it showed that Godfrey had an original imagination worth cultivating and a distinct sense for colour. Perhaps the best touch is that contained in the couplet—

Amidst the throng stood cold and heartless Fear,  
The fall of nations whispering in each ear.

This will not suggest to many readers the propriety of perusing about five hundred lines, nor will it make them couple the name of Godfrey with that of Keats, yet we shall not exaggerate if we say that his fate was pathetic, and that American literature perhaps suffered a small loss in his early death.

His friend Nathaniel Evans properly thought that a great loss had been suffered, and wrote a poor but sincere elegy upon him, in which the best things were borrowed from "Lycidas." Evans, like Godfrey, served an uncongenial apprenticeship. Then he went to college, visited England for ordination, returned for mission work in New Jersey, and died at the age of twenty-five. He was no more of a Keats than Godfrey, perhaps not so much; yet he, too, showed promise, especially in his ambitious "Ode on the Prospect of Peace, 1761." It was no bad sign that these young men were imitating Gray and Collins rather than Pope. In his pretty "Hymn to May" Evans also showed that the cadences of "L'Allegro" were ringing in provincial ears along the beautiful banks of the Delaware, while in his pleasant "Ode to my Ingenious Friend, Mr. Thomas Godfrey," he showed that

Horace soon becomes acclimated anywhere. The latter poem leaves one with a mild regret that neither of the young poets was spared to realize the conventional wish expressed in the last stanza:

Then may we both, in time, retreat  
To some fair villa, sweetly neat,  
To entertain the Muses;  
And then life's noise and trouble leave—  
Supremely blest, we'll never grieve  
At what the world refuses.

It is easy now to conclude that in all these poets of Pennsylvania a lighter touch may be observed than in their New England compeers, that in their imitativeness they are more aspiring—striking out into untried lines, the elaborate ode, and the poetic drama. They display, too, a marked attachment to their city and colony, and give slight though plain indications that, while still colonial, they are Americans in embryo. They are not worthy of detailed analysis and study, much less of being generally read, but they suffice to prove that mentally as well as materially the American colonies had made an advance which it would have been well for the statesmen of the mother-country to have appreciated.

## CHAPTER VI

### LATER COLONIAL PROSE (1701-64)

It is a commonplace of literary history that during the first half of the eighteenth century the achievements of British writers in the domain of prose were conspicuously great. The essay and the novel are practically creations of the era, and so is the popular magazine. The same period witnessed the development of criticism and political writing, saw notable work accomplished in metaphysics, and furnished training to the writers who were soon to lay the foundations of modern history and biography. With regard to formal style also the importance of the epoch cannot be easily overestimated. Cowley and Dryden had done much to introduce the needed qualities of regularity, uniformity, precision, balance—to borrow Matthew Arnold's classification—but Addison and Swift, to name no others, did more. It may be doubted whether for the main purposes of prose the style of the author of *Gulliver's Travels* has ever been surpassed, and, if the name of Addison means less to us than it did to Macaulay, this is not due to the fact that we can point to many later writers possessed of more urbanity.

But what of American prose during this period, which



was even less propitious to imaginative creation in poetry than was the corresponding period in England? Professor Tyler, its main historian, found many good words to say of it, discovered worthy writers who had been unjustly forgotten, and apparently thought that a considerable advance had been made over the work of the seventeenth century. It would seem that in many respects he was right. It was well for Americans and their literature that thought should be gradually secularized. It was well that the isolation of New England should be broken down even at the expense of the introduction of a colonial spirit of dependency in matters of taste. It was well, in the matter of style, that the old cumbrous prose of the theological giants should be exchanged for the simpler and more lucid prose of their less robust successors. In all these particulars American prose showed by 1764 an appreciable advance. We can now see that it had made still more important progress. The advent of Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin proved that the colonies could produce thinkers of great originality and power.

Yet, granting the importance of Edwards and Franklin and the advantages attendant on increased secularization of thought and simplification of style, it may still be doubted whether American prose from 1701 to 1764 is worthy of as much attention as that of the sixty-four years preceding. The New England of the Puritan prime is more unique and interesting than the combined colonies of half a century later; the ideals and thoughts of its leading spirits are representative of a great movement at its height, and are thus of more value to posterity than the ideals and thoughts of a generation that lived upon a lower

plane and consciously or unconsciously acknowledged a colonial inferiority. The rugged Thomas Hooker deserves more space than the polished Benjamin Colman, whose elegant diction could easily have been matched in London, as also his sentimental attachment to the celebrated Philomela,<sup>1</sup> even if few of his British clerical contemporaries had like him fought against French privateers and suffered a barbarous captivity. So, too, the stentorian Captain Edward Johnson is a more interesting historian to the student of literature than the far more scientific and trustworthy Thomas Prince. If these points be well taken, it follows that all the important prose produced in the colonies during more than half a century may be adequately treated in less space than would be required for a satisfactory discussion of one of the great contemporary British masters. For it must be remembered that Jonathan Edwards, great as he was intellectually, was not primarily a literary man, and that a similar statement may be made with regard to Franklin.

The secularization of the New England mind, its declination from the heights of spiritual fervour to the plains of the matter-of-fact common sense in which the typical Yankee has long since made himself at home, is well illustrated in a book which was published in London in the last year of the seventeenth century. This was Robert Calef's *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, a prosaic tract which furnished a needed antidote to the fantastic lucubrations of Cotton Mather apropos of the witchcraft

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<sup>1</sup> Miss Elizabeth Singer, honoured by the attentions of Matthew Prior, but now dimly remembered as the exemplary Mrs. Rowe, whose books were once so popular.

epidemic. An equally important kind of secularization was shown the same year in Judge Sewall's folio tract of three pages entitled *The Selling of Joseph*—perhaps the first American antislavery document. SAMUEL SEWALL (1652-1730), who, although born in England, was graduated at Harvard and was a typical New Englander of the Brahmin caste, never, of course, completely outgrew the traditions of the theocracy under which he was trained for the high positions on the bench and in the council that he subsequently filled. He showed, however, that his mind was not impervious to doubt—and what better sign of intellectual progress could he have exhibited at that time?—by confessing in public his contrition for the part he had played in the persecution of the witches. In three years he was questioning the morality of slavery and asserting the equal rights of all men as the sons of Adam. He also defended the Indians, and was patriotic enough to draw from Scripture the assurance that America was destined to be the seat of the New Jerusalem. His handling of biblical prophecies linked him with the generation that was passing; his humanitarian proclivities made him a worthy forerunner of a personage few of whose days and nights were spent in reading the Apocalypse—to wit, Benjamin Franklin.

Sewall was, perhaps, just as much like Franklin in his Yankee shrewdness and in his naïve lack of sentiment. We learn this from his *Diary*, one of the most interesting and valuable documents of the Colonial Period. It covers the larger portion of his life, and with his letters, his commonplace book, and his abstracts of the sermons he heard, furnishes us with materials for construct-

ing a far from incomplete social history of the New England of his day. Although his position in literature will never be so high as that of the immortal Pepys, the New England diarist has in many a passage set himself as clearly before us as the English navy clerk has done. While Pepys collected maps and prints, Sewall collected election sermons, which he presented to the ladies to whom as a widower he paid his canny addresses. Among these ladies was a certain Madam Winthrop, whose affections, indeed, were not kindled by "vain amatorious poems" of this kind, but who lives with her lover, or rather suitor, through a few pages of his Diary as vividly almost as Uncle Toby and the Widow Wadman live in the pages of Sterne. And just as no wooer was ever more matter of fact than Sewall, so no rejected suitor was ever more philosophical. Bidding the recalcitrant dame adieu, he noted that "her dress was not so clean as sometime it had been. Jehovah jireh!" When later she "made a Treat" of which he had no notice, we feel sure that he was not lonesome when he "abode in the Council Chamber for fear of the Rain, and din'd alone upon Kilby's Pyes and good Beer." The pleasures of the table were evidently not despised by this survivor of theocratic times, who loved gossip as well as sermons, argued gravely in favour of the ultimate salvation of women, and expostulated against First of April pranks. A passage describing his energy in the latter capacity is good enough to be inserted as a slight sample of what the reader of the Diary may expect to find:

April 1, 1719. "In the Morning I dehorted Sam Hirsh and Grindal Rawson from playing Idle Tricks be-



cause 'twas first of April. They were the greatest fools that did so. N. E. men came hither to avoid anniversary days, the keeping of them, such as the 25th of Dec."

Sewall is not the only diarist of this period who is worth reading. A *Journal* of a journey undertaken on horseback in 1704 from Boston to New York by Mrs. Sarah Kemble Knight, a school-mistress of the former place, both gives us a picturesque account of a unique expedition which required some at least of the qualities of a veritable Wife of Bath, and shows us that the spirits of New England women were becoming as emancipated as the minds of the men. The bold traveller described her adventures in prose of no literary merit save for its lack of cumbrous pretension, but she also dropped into verse when it suited her fancy, and committed to paper her own witticisms and the good stories of others. She discovered apparently few beauties of nature, but her eye was almost if not quite as quick to detect rusticity of manners as those of a contemporary London matron would have been. Yet although an embryo Bostonian of the modern type, Madam Knight was seemingly much less discomposed by the primitive conditions that surrounded her than amused by them. In other words, she was also an embryo democrat, a true American woman, keenly alive to everything that went on around her and quite capable of taking care of herself in any emergency.

While Mrs. Knight was writing her account of her journey, a young man was being educated in England who, a quarter of a century later, was to make a more interesting expedition and to write a more fascinating account of

it. This was WILLIAM BYRD, son of a distinguished Virginian planter and official of the same name. The younger Byrd was born in 1674, "to one of the amplest fortunes in this country," according to his epitaph; he was educated under the direction of Sir Robert Southwell, was called to the bar in the Middle Temple, made many notable acquaintances, chief among them being Charles Boyle, Earl of Orrery; travelled in France and the Low Countries, and finally returned to Virginia to preside over his princely dominions and to fill high public positions in his native colony. At his home, Westover, on the north bank of the James, he dispensed hospitality with an old-world elegance and collected a library of about four thousand volumes. His own volume of manuscripts is of more importance to us, however, for it shows that the receiver-general of his Majesty's revenues and the president of the council was not merely "the splendid economist" his monument declares him to have been, but also a real man of letters who, in a more favourable environment, might have become a fairly eminent, if not a great writer. These manuscripts, which were not published until 1841, ninety-seven years after their author's death, consist of a *History of the Dividing Line Run in the Year 1728*, *A Journey to the Land of Eden, A. D. 1733*, and *A Progress to the Mines*. The first is decidedly the most important, although the last gives an account of a visit to Governor Spotswood and throws light on the manners of the Virginian aristocracy of the period. The dividing line, for the drawing of which Colonel Byrd was a commissioner, ran through the great Dismal Swamp between Virginia and the far more primitive North Carolina. The uncouth inhabitants of the

latter region, who besieged the chaplain of the expedition in order to have their children baptized but not to have their marriages solemnized by the Church, afforded the cultured Cavalier infinite amusement. He noted down in a sprightly way their laziness, their diet, their diseases, and in the same familiar style he described the experiences of himself and his companions, as well as the natural and economic features of the wild country through which the line was slowly drawn. For the beauties of nature his eye was not so well trained, but his culture and his native genius made him produce a narrative much more readable than the *New Voyage to Carolina*, which another surveyor, the Scotchman John Lawson, had published in 1700, valuable as the latter treatise is to the historian. Colonel Byrd, as his interesting correspondence alone suffices to show, had the easy grace that a "writer of quality" ought to have, and he was what writers of "quality" seldom are, a man of wide-reaching, almost democratic sympathies, and of full intelligence. He was somewhat self-conscious and liked to air his knowledge, which was extensive, although occasionally at fault, but he was probably the least provincial American of his generation. Not many of his contemporaries would have written thus about intermarrying with the Indians:

For, after all that can be said, a sprightly lover is the most prevailing missionary that can be sent among these, or any other infidels. . . . Had such affinities been contracted in the beginning, how much bloodshed had been prevented, and how populous would the country have been, and, consequently, how considerable? Nor would the shade of the skin have been any reproach at this day; for if a Moor may be washed white in three generations, surely an Indian might have been blanched in two.

The transition from Colonel Byrd to another interesting Virginian historian, Robert Beverley, is quite natural, even if it carries us backward in point of time. Beverley, like Byrd, was a planter of good family and large estates. He, too, had been educated in England, but he was evidently not much influenced by old-world culture, and he had few of the lordly pretensions of the wealthier planters. He would probably have been innocent of authorship had not a bookseller submitted to him, while he was on a business visit to London, in 1703, those sheets of Oldmixon's *British Empire in America* that related to Virginia and the Carolinas. Early work in connection with colonial records and his thorough knowledge of his own people enabled Beverley to detect so many errors on the part of the British writer that he forbore to make corrections and began to compose his own *History and Present State of Virginia*. This was published in 1705, was translated into French, and in 1722, six years after its author's death, appeared in an enlarged edition. It was worthy of the favour it received, not so much as an historical narrative, but as a lively book about a people who were themselves very much alive. Beverley wrote with scarcely a trace of literary affectation; hence his straightforward book gives a trustworthy picture of its time and can be read to-day with pleasure. The life it describes was not an elevated one, but it was full of a hearty, open-air charm not only rarely to be found in England and Europe at that day, but also comparatively absent from other portions of the new world. Their genial climate, their rich broad fields, their freedom from cramping social restrictions, had combined with their inherited virtues and liber-



ties to make the Virginians a proud and manly stock from whom almost anything might be expected except literary and commercial development. Yet even these independent people and their historian were bound to the old world by stronger ties than they were perhaps aware of. Even Beverley and his wolf-hunting friends remembered "what Elian and Pliny write of the horses being benumbed in their legs if they tread in the tracke of a wolf," and they solemnly determined from observation that it does not hold good in Virginia.

We learn from another readable *Present State of Virginia*, published at London nineteen years later (1724) by the Rev. Hugh Jones, that Virginian youths, while of quick parts, were inclined to be utilitarian in their choice of studies. Jones, who was at one time a professor at William and Mary College, composed text-books for them in English rather than in Latin and explained to his British readers, who had not outgrown their habit of carping at everything colonial, that Virginians, if taught in a "plain and short method truly applicable to their genius," would "willingly and readily master" useful branches of learning. The differentiation of habits and ideals between the mother- and the daughter-country had already begun as well as the literature of explanation and defence on the part of the latter. Jones's remarks about his students and their Virginian, nay, rather their American, propensity to clamour for short cuts to learning, account in part for the melancholy fate of a writer who, like him, was chaplain to the House of Burgesses and connected with William and Mary College. The Rev. William Stith (1689-1755), a gentleman

of good birth and training, was a painstaking student of antiquity who indulged the delusion that his fellow-aristocrats would be at the cost of reading and paying for a voluminous history of their beloved colony. But the pupils of the Rev. Mr. Jones were the only possible public for the Rev. Mr. Stith's *History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia*, published at Williamsburg, in 1747, and they seem to have rebelled at the idea that the deeds of their fathers would require "more than one volume, and cost them above half a Pistole." The learned author, who had been most scholarly in his collection and use of manuscript and printed sources, was "therefore obliged to restrain *his* hand" and carried his narrative down only to the year 1624. Both to his contemporaries and to posterity such "restraint" has passed rather for abandonment, and a writer who deserves praise for his conscientiousness, his priority not merely among Southern historians, but among serious men of letters in his section, and for his dignified style, was labelled by Jefferson as "inelegant and often too minute to be tolerable," and had to wait for his rehabilitation until the present generation, which seems to pardon all degrees of diffuseness in the writing of history.

There were a few other Southern writers of prose during our period—verse, save for a Maryland imitation of *Hudibras*, was almost non-existent it would seem—but they are unimportant. One tract may, however, be mentioned—*A True and Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia*, written and published (Charleston and London, 1740) by a certain Patrick Tailfefer and other discontented writers who had fled from

Oglethorpe's infant colony. These refugees might well have answered Pope's couplet—

One driven by strong benevolence of soul  
Shall fly, like Oglethorpe, from pole to pole,

with another verse of his making—

Perfume to you, to me is excrement.

Their narrative was as savagely ironical a piece of special pleading as was produced in the colonies during this contentious epoch, but it is impossible to believe that Oglethorpe deserved to be rated in language that would justly have applied to Louis XIV for his ravaging of the Palatinate.

Passing northward, around Philadelphia, we find little to hinder us from returning at once to New England, for the historical writing done in New York and New Jersey possessed very little literary interest and was too often marked by partisanship rather than by the scholarship that characterized Stith and the greatest of his New England contemporaries, the Rev. Thomas Prince (1687-1758). This minister of the Old South Church in Boston was an even more thoroughgoing scholar than the ex-president of William and Mary, and he had a more propitious environment in which to work, although, like Stith, he had reason to complain of the indifference of his fellow-citizens to his labours in their behalf. After seeing something of the West Indies and of England he settled down to the life of a clergyman-scholar of a less Herculean but certainly less antiquated and not less praiseworthy type than Cotton Mather. He published sermons and memoirs, discussed New England earthquakes, tinkered with

the *Psalm Book*, and last but not least collected manuscripts and books relating to New England history, the surviving portion of which constitutes the important Prince Collection in the Boston Public Library. From these multifarious writings of other scholars grew his own *Chronological History of New England*, the first volume of which was published in 1736. The book may perhaps be described as a cross between the *Magnalia* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, its author showing his affiliations with the middle ages by furnishing an introduction dealing with the chief events of human history from the days of Adam downward. The thoroughness of his scholarship has induced modern historians to wish that he had omitted this ponderous introduction and devoted the time saved to bringing his narrative beyond the year 1633. Most probably contemporary readers uttered the same wish—which possibly accounts for the fact that nearly twenty years elapsed before Prince began to issue his second volume in sixpenny parts. Only three of these appeared, and a work which, whatever its defects of style, marked a notable advance toward a scientific conception of history and has also not a little of the nobility attaching to the colossal scholarly undertakings of the preceding century, remains a mere fragment.

The fame of Prince has overshadowed that of other worthy New England historiographers, such as the chroniclers of the Indian wars, Church, Penhallow, and Niles, who will not be treated here, since lists of names and dates are not interesting and are somewhat dangerous to the literary historian. One contemporary of Prince's deserves, however, a paragraph to himself, not because he was a



scientific historian, but because he was a picturesque writer. William Douglass, a well-educated Scotch physician, settled in Boston in 1718, and died there in 1752, at the age of sixty-one. He represented the iconoclastic, rationalistic spirit characteristic of some of the early British deists, and was thus completely out of harmony with his Puritan environment, and continually engaged in controversies. He carried these over into his *Summary, Historical and Political, of the First Planting, Progressive Improvements, and Present State of the British Settlements in North America*—a work published at Boston in two volumes (1748-53). As Professor Tyler has remarked, Douglass was not a historian at all but essentially a journalist and pamphleteer. In his curious composition much of the spleen of Swift seems to have mingled with some of the whimsicality of Sterne. As he was only a New Englander by adoption, we can hardly afford to linger over him, but the reader who loves to encounter a unique personality and especially the reader who appreciates pungent foot-notes may be safely recommended to glance over the *Summary*. The religious enthusiasm of Whitefield and the tar-water of Bishop Berkeley provoked our author's unbounded scorn, but while Douglass despised nostrums, whether medical or religious, he was always ready to give his reader the benefit, often in long digressions, of his own multifarious knowledge and opinions. He "animadverted" constantly upon paper currencies, "digressed" willingly upon sects and schisms, and at the close of his treatise, having been interrupted in its composition by an epidemic of small-pox, he supplemented the ten pages that sufficed to describe Virginia with twenty-two devoted to that malady.

The fact that Douglass was able to live in Boston bears testimony to the growing tolerance of New England, but it does not prove that the Brahmin clergy had by any means been driven from the field. Whether or not the eighteenth-century divines were on the whole inferior in power and authority to their forerunners, they surely constituted a very formidable body of voluminous writers. Some of them have been treated already in other capacities. To these might be added, did space permit, such commanding personalities as John Higginson; John Barnard, whose *Autobiography* is interesting; Samuel Willard, whose *Complete Body of Divinity* of 1726 was the first American folio; and Samuel Johnson, the first president of King's College (Columbia), a friend of Berkeley's, an apostate to Episcopacy, and a moral philosopher of repute. All these were able men, much looked up to by their contemporaries, much engaged in controversial writing, especially about the ecclesiastical firebrand Whitefield. Important also were Alexander Garden of Charleston and the eloquent Samuel Davies, who, while a pastor in Virginia, prophesied the glory of "that heroic youth, Colonel Washington." Probably greater than any of them was the courageous John Wise (1652?–1725) of Ipswich, who defended the churches and the laity against the hierarchy, represented by the Mathers, in two rather short treatises<sup>1</sup> full of ecclesiastical and political learning, of wit, of imagination, and of a semi-Miltonic power of fulmination. But we must set even Wise aside in favour

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<sup>1</sup> *The Churches' Quarrel Espoused* (Boston, 1710) and *A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches* (Boston, 1717).

of the ablest of all these colonial divines, the outcast of Northampton.

Posterity cannot be charged with having neglected the fame of JONATHAN EDWARDS. People who have never read a line of the ponderous tomes that include most of his "Works" at least connect his name with one sulphurous sermon or rather with the tremendous emotional effects produced by it. Perhaps no other American save Franklin has so affected the thought of the world; certainly no other American is spoken of with respect as a metaphysician of the first order. In his own country scholarly men who have never studied him do not protest violently against the statement—which is probably as correct as such statements usually are—that he is, taking him all in all, the greatest intellectual force America has yet produced. His ardent admirers go farther, and apparently with the naturalness of perfect good faith, draw interesting parallels between his career and genius and those of no less a personage than Dante.

Such a parallel is not misleading, but it is, of course, obvious that in the history of culture the great Florentine is far more important than the great preacher and metaphysician. Edwards may fairly rank among the supreme theologians, with St. Augustine and Calvin; in precocity of genius he has few rivals; in the range of his powers he may almost be compared with Leonardo or with Pascal. Yet such comparisons are not specially illuminating because they do not seem to touch the main source of his power over both his contemporaries and posterity. The ultimate source of that power appears to be his extraordinary faculty of logical analysis, and the apprehension of this fact at

once suggests comparison, not with any foreigner, but with another American, a later graduate of Yale College, the great political theorist, John C. Calhoun. The theology of Edwards, the political theories of Calhoun are to-day alike untenable in their entirety, but none who grants their premises can escape the rigour of their logic. Edwards, however, was more of a man of letters than Calhoun, which warrants giving him more attention than he would command here in his capacity of metaphysical theologian.

Jonathan Edwards, who was born at East Windsor, Connecticut, October 5, 1703, was truly a "marvellous boy." His early reading was remarkable, and at the age of ten he wrote against the idea of the materiality of the soul. At the age of twelve he sent a European correspondent of his father a minute account of the "wondrous way of the working of the spider." In 1716 he entered Yale, graduating four years later with a knowledge of natural and mental philosophy, for which he must have been more indebted to his own speculations than to the lectures of his instructors. It is still a question among students of his life whether the ideal philosophy of his juvenile notes owed anything either to Malebranche or to Berkeley. It is clear, however, that if he owed little to other thinkers save Locke, he owed a great deal to his environment. No colonial could have a background of culture; but every thoughtful New Englander had a background of spiritual emotionality. From his earliest years Edwards was concerned about his soul, the doctrine of God's sovereignty and man's damnation alone standing in the way of his assurance of as much religious peace as



Calvinism admitted. During his stay at college his doubts suddenly vanished and in their stead he experienced "an inward sweet delight in God," which grew with his years until he fully deserved the epithet "God-intoxicated."

This "God-intoxication" was part of his New England inheritance, and along with a passionate love of nature, rare at that time anywhere, it made Edwards a poet in feeling and almost in expression. He studied theology, and after a short trial at preaching in New York and two years' tutoring at Yale, he became the colleague of his distinguished grandfather Solomon Stoddard, at Northampton, Massachusetts. Then he married the mystically spiritual Sarah Pierrepont, whom he had previously described in words so beautiful that few writers who have dealt with his life have been able to resist the temptation to quote them:

They say there is a young lady in New Haven who is beloved of that great Being who made and rules the world, and that there are certain seasons in which this great Being, in some way or other invisible, comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight, and that she hardly cares for anything except to meditate on Him; that she expects after a while to be received up where He is, to be raised up out of the world and caught up into heaven; being assured that he loves her too well to let her remain at a distance from Him always. There she is to dwell with Him, and to be ravished with His love and delight forever.

"Ravished with His love and delight"—that was what Edwards himself was although he was soon to be known, ironically enough, as the most strenuous of all preachers of the wrath of God. It was his fate to represent the culmination of Calvinism, for being born with a philosophic mind he developed the theology that had been

handed down to him instead of merely sounding its praises as the scholastic Mather had done. But he was also a representative of the emotional Christianity of his own epoch, and was thus spiritually akin to the Wesleys and to Whitefield. It is this phase of his genius that makes him more fruitful to the religious-minded of the present day than any other colonial divine, and it is to this phase that we owe such sentences as those that follow, sentences which seem to show that this American provincial had in him the makings of a great prose writer, if not a true poet:

So that, when we are delighted with flowers, meadows, and gentle breezes of wind, we may consider that we see only the emanation of the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ. When we behold the fragrant rose and lily, we see His love and purity. So the green trees and fields, and singing of birds, are the emanation of His infinite joy and benignity. The easiness and naturalness of trees and vines are shadows of His beauty and loveliness. The crystal rivers and murmuring streams are the footsteps of his favour, grace, and beauty. When we behold the light and brightness of the sun, the golden edges of an evening cloud, or the beauteous bow, we behold the adumbrations of His glory and goodness; and in the blue sky, of His mildness and gentleness. There are also many things wherein we may behold his awful majesty: in the sun in his strength, in comets, in thunder, in the hovering thunder-cloud, in rugged rocks, and the brows of mountains. That beauteous light with which the world is filled in a clear day is a lively shadow of His spotless holiness, and happiness and delight in communicating Himself.

Love of God and of his fellow-men, love of his wife, and love of nature helped to render successful the first seventeen years of Edwards's ministry at Northampton. His fame as a preacher spread throughout New England, and after 1734 he had wonderful things to report about the progress his people were making in spiritual

matters. Two of his most interesting books are due to this revival, the Great Awakening, which flamed forth again in the early forties. They are *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions*, a long letter addressed to Colman (1736), and *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England* (1742). None of his careful treatises should receive criticism at other hands than those of trained specialists, but it is permissible to say that even laymen can perceive that t' e author of the letter to Colman was not a wonder-mongering scholastic like Cotton Mather, but one of the most acute psychological observers that ever lived, even though he did seriously believe that the spirit of God had manifested itself credibly and creditably in the truly astounding conversion of a child of four years.

Modern revivalists still make use of minatory sermons; it is no wonder that Edwards, a consistent Calvinist and an emphasize of the power of God, should have outdone all predecessors in his imaginative presentations of the horrors of damnation, or that he should have outdone his own prior and subsequent sinister achievements, on that July morning, 1741, in the midst of the second Awakening, when he preached his famous Enfield sermon. "Sinners in the hands of an angry God" may well have produced the effects traditionally ascribed to it, in spite of the fact that the tall preacher with the spiritual face read it calmly and used none of the artifices of the latter-day exhorter. Reading the sermon we feel that it is impregnated with imagination which is all the more effective for being restrained. As always with Edwards, we are impressed by the force of the logic—in fact, there is little weakness anywhere except when he descends to verbal exposition.

The man who could say to his cowering congregation: God "will not only hate you, but he will have you in the utmost contempt; no place shall be thought fit for you but under his feet, to be trodden down as the mire in the streets," may not seem to sensitive readers worthy of praise, but the student of literature cannot withhold from him whatever meed is due to the Artist of Damnation. Edwards's sermons may lack charm, some of them may seem to be mere logomachies, others may appear ruthless; we must nevertheless confess that they prove how a truly great genius involuntarily triumphs over his own provinciality and asserts his essential kinship through the creative imagination with all other supremely endowed men. There was more in common between the author of *Lear* and the preacher of Enfield than is dreamt of in the philosophy of many readers and critics. And there was not a little in common between their audiences. The Elizabethan spectator, undistracted by elaborate scenery and gorgeous trappings, gave his imagination free scope and was fairly swept away, we cannot doubt, by the whirlwind of *Lear*'s fury; the Connecticut church-goer, having no background of culture, no cosmopolitan outlook of present interests, no æsthetic refinement softening and toning his emotions, had also no choice but to give his imagination free play and be plunged into the depths of the yawning hell over which the great preacher had suspended him.

But revivals have always been followed by reactions. In the case of Edwards and Northampton the reaction was of a particularly painful nature, which can be but briefly described here. Edwards remonstrated with some of his



young parishioners who were reading what to him were impure books, but to us would probably seem only coarse or silly novels. To his chagrin he found that the evil was wide-spread and that parents and relatives were not disposed to side sufficiently with the pastor. Then came a controversy about enforcing the pretermitted rule which made some personal profession of religious convictions a prerequisite to admission to the communion. Edwards's position was at once that of the past and of the future, but it was not that of the majority of his parishioners. The unfortunate controversy that ensued resulted in his being forced to resign (1750). Posterity has naturally sided with the noble exile, who a year later became a missionary to a few Indians at Stockbridge; but careful students assure us that, as we might have expected, something may be said in favour of the Northampton congregation.

Northampton's loss was the world's gain; the pastor and preacher became the profound theologian and metaphysician. The important *Treatise concerning the Religious Affections* (1746) followed the Awakening and preceded the exile; so also did his *Inquiry into the Qualifications for Full Communion in the Church* and his not specially interesting *Life of David Brainerd* (1749), the evangelical consumptive missionary. Now in 1754 appeared the great *Freedom of the Will*, the best known of his treatises, the most strenuously logical, and the one on which his fame as a metaphysician chiefly rests. Four years later *A Treatise on Original Sin*, by no means the only production of the interval, focussed the attention of theologians upon the central point of the Calvinistic sys-

tem. But its great author had already gone to the reward he had held out to the faithful few. He had barely been installed as president of the new Princeton College, in the place of his son-in-law, the Rev. Aaron Burr, father of the notorious politician of later days, when for the sake of precaution he was inoculated for the small-pox and succumbed to the superinduced disease. His epitaph declared him to be "second to no mortal man," a statement which probably did not misrepresent the opinion of his contemporaries in New England, the Middle Colonies, and Scotland. His fate had been pathetic, his personal piety had been both beautiful and noble, his achievements in theology and philosophy had reflected great credit upon his native land. Thus in his death at least he did not experience the proverbial fate of the prophet.

Since his death Edwards's fame has grown rather than diminished. He was fortunate in having a son capable of expounding his doctrines and in developing able expositors and pupils both in America and in Scotland. The intellectual force of his chief treatise impressed not only his theological adherents but also students of philosophy and science, such men, for example, as Lord Kames and Priestley, and later Sir James Mackintosh, and he took his place among the most original of the world's metaphysicians. In view of the facts that he was not learned, that he wrote almost in the wilderness, that the homely English he used was not well adapted to metaphysical purposes, it is hardly hyperbolical to claim that few men have ever accomplished more by sheer force of hard thinking. As must repeatedly be said, whoever once gets in the grasp

of Edwards's logic finds his struggles to free himself almost vain. It is plain, of course, that *The Freedom of the Will* is a dead book so far as the mass of mankind is concerned, and that it is from other works of its author, some of them published long after his death and some still in manuscript, that modern theologians derive inspiration and enlightenment; but it is equally plain that in his classic treatise Edwards grappled with his Arminian foes as only a giant can grapple, and that the book must always rank not only among epoch-making works but also as perhaps the sole fundamental contribution, outside the sphere of politics, that America has made to the world's thought. Critical predictions are notoriously unsafe, but one need not be a theologian or a metaphysician to feel that Jonathan Edwards may mean more to the twenty-first century than he did to the nineteenth. For in him are found those seminal principles that determine the intellectual harvests of successive generations, remaining permanent in their influence in spite of the modifying effects of time. In Edwards Calvinism found its ablest expounder, but in him lay also the germs of Unitarianism and Universalism. Even the Tractarian and the Roman Catholic can find in him matter to their purposes, and the theist and agnostic can use him to advantage also. He is, like the great poets, an ever-fresh fountain of inspiration and stimulation to all who truly think. And even the literary critic, although he must perforce find many pages arid, although he must wish to trim many a long and loosely built sentence, may nevertheless derive exquisite æsthetic pleasure from beautiful passages, may be thrilled by frequent contact with a strong and unhackneyed imagination, and may finally

conclude with justice that he has been perusing the works of a writer who is not only a rare artist of his kind but also a master of a fluent and individual if in the main unattractive style. As man, as thinker, as writer, Jonathan Edwards ranks among the giants—and he is probably the only American, outside the sphere of public life in its more technical sense, who does so rank. He has his limitations, but they are chiefly due to a lack of culture which he could not help. A background of culture might have made a really great book of the series of sermons of 1739, published after his death as *A History of the Work of Redemption*. An attempt to show “how the most remarkable events, in all ages from the fall to the present times, recorded in sacred and profane history, were adapted to promote” the work of salvation, might in other hands have become truly a literary masterpiece rather than merely a conspicuous illustration of the narrowness of colonial Calvinism. But how could Connecticut have produced a Bossuet?

Another New England colony, Massachusetts, could, however, produce three years after Edwards was born a man who, in his own peculiar way, had as wide an outlook as the great French bishop, perhaps even a wider. But BENJAMIN FRANKLIN as utilitarian and scientist did not need such a background of culture as Edwards did, and before he entered upon his career as diplomat and cosmopolitan sage he had obtained by judicious reading, travel, and study of mankind a very considerable amount of culture of a genuine if not altogether conventional kind. He was therefore very far from being a colonial in any derogatory sense of the word, and he might logic-



ally be treated as belonging to the Revolutionary Period. Yet the foundations of his character were laid in the Colonial Period; very shortly after 1750 he won world-wide fame for his electrical discoveries; his utilitarian services to his people had been abundantly manifested before the same date, as well as his mastery of style. Hence it is just as logical to treat him in juxtaposition with his great contemporary and almost complete opposite, Edwards. Indeed, it might almost be claimed that Franklin's career as diplomat, statesman, and cosmopolitan sage, notable and interesting as it was, seems to have been something of an aftermath. However this may be, it is at least clear that his political writings are not the most important portion of his literary work, and that for our present purposes we need not treat him as a half-way contemporary of Jefferson's.

Probably no other eighteenth-century American lives so truly for his latter-day countrymen as Benjamin Franklin, and for this fact there seem to be two main reasons: One is that as an embodiment of practical learning, shrewd mother-wit, honesty, and patriotism, he is a typical and unapproachable product of what his countrymen are pleased to call "true Americanism." The other is that he is, perhaps, the most complete representative of his century that any nation can point to. If this seems a rash statement to admirers of Washington, Dr. Johnson, Frederick the Great, or Voltaire, it may be urged in reply that in none of these does the age of prose and reason appear to find such adequate expression, Washington being beyond his own or any other century, Dr. Johnson not sufficiently representing his age on its unspiritual side,

Frederick the Great being too extreme a combination of daring seriousness of purpose and petty affectation, and Voltaire being at once too intense and not radical enough, and too entirely a man of letters. Franklin, on the other hand, thoroughly represents his age in its practicality, in its devotion to science, in its intellectual curiosity, in its humanitarianism, in its lack of spirituality, in its calm self-content—in short, in its exaltation of prose and reason over poetry and faith. A review of the facts of his life will help to establish this proposition.

Such a review is hardly needed here, because the *Autobiography* is one of those classics that people really read. Still we may remember that Franklin was born in Boston, January 17, 1706; that his father was a tallow-chandler with a large family not easily provided with schooling; that he was early apprenticed to his brother, a printer; that he read Defoe, Locke, Addison, Bunyan, and Shaftesbury; and that he wrote Addisonian essays which he inserted anonymously in his brother's newspaper, *The New England Courant*. The last fact reminds us that with Franklin American journalism practically begins. The first number of *Public Occurrences*, issued in Boston in 1690, brought about its suppression, and it was only after fourteen years that *The Boston News-Letter* began its career, which for fifteen years was literally unrivalled. Then the spread of these small, rather timorous sheets, which nevertheless made for colonial unity, became steady and constant, until, by the time of the Stamp Act, over forty had been established. As in England, the magazine was of later origin, Franklin himself starting the first at Philadelphia, in 1741, under the cumbrous title of *The*

*General Magazine and Historical Chronicle for all the British Plantations in America.* The contents were imitative, but the title contained a tiny germ of nationality.

How Franklin reached Philadelphia is now a familiar passage of literary history. We can follow the runaway apprentice, already suspected of being a deistical philosopher, to New York, and thence to the Pennsylvania town, more vividly through his own pages than we can follow the early movements of Johnson through the pages of Boswell. Whittington and his cat entering London are scarcely more picturesque than Franklin with his three rolls, one under either arm and the third in his mouth, walking up Market Street and passing before the critical eyes of the young girl destined to be his wife.

Philadelphia, in 1723, the year of Franklin's arrival, was a comparatively cosmopolitan place, a fact due to the presence of a considerable non-Quaker population. It contained some interesting men who were busy writing and printing things of no great value now, yet of contemporary influence. Of these we need recall only the Scotch-Irishman James Logan, representative of Penn and his family, who occupied his leisure from official duties by corresponding with scholars foreign and domestic, by research in mathematics and other sciences, by linguistic studies, and by the publication of Latin treatises and of translations such as that of Cicero's *Cato Major*. Franklin was soon to eclipse as a scientist not only Logan, but also the Quaker naturalist and explorer of America John Bartram; the cultivated Harvard Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy John Winthrop; the Virginian botanist John Clayton; and the score of

other American provincials who were labouring to explore the wonders of nature in the new world; but the splendour of his achievements should not cause us to forget that he was after all, in this respect of intellectual curiosity, little more than *primus inter pares*.

For thirty-four years Franklin's life now becomes practically the history of Philadelphia, nay, of Pennsylvania. After a journey to England and some youthful waywardness he settled down to a life admirably compounded of frugal self-interest and enlightened public service. In 1733 he published the first almanac in which the subsequently immortal Richard Saunders made his bow to an extravagant world, and began to preach the blessedness of peace and contentment. About ninety years later the youthful Balzac thought it no harm to turn the lanky American moralist into a corpulent French vicar. This is one proof among many that the creator of Poor Richard and Father Abraham was already a true man of letters, although neither he nor the thousands of humble people who agreed with him that a stitch in time saves nine had much or any suspicion of the fact. For pointed application of homely wisdom, whether his own or another's makes little difference, Franklin has had no superior; but even his greatest admirers must admit that it was an evil day for him when he undertook to revise the Lord's Prayer.

This last unspeakable performance was, however, at bottom only an unfortunate illustration of his humanitarianism. The Lord's Prayer must be modified, he contended, to suit the needs of latter-day men and women. However far astray his reasoning may have been, his critics should never forget that he has to his credit, be-



sides his scheme for arriving at "moral perfection," the establishment of a fire-company, a public library, an academy, a college, a postal system. They should not forget that if he did lay as much stress on sanitation as on morality, he nevertheless snatched the lightning from the skies and sceptres from the hands of tyrants.

Of Franklin's international achievements as colonial agent in London, as republican diplomat, and as a new-world solvent of old-world conservatism, there is little need to speak. He accepted with composure the honours paid him, was the equal of the great Englishmen and Frenchmen who owned him as a distinguished fellow-citizen of the republic of thought and culture, and in his letters, political pamphlets, and satirical dialogues proved himself as complete a master as he had done in his scientific lucubrations. When he died, in 1790, he had proved himself to be almost as masterly a statesman. His fame, not merely as a consummate type of the self-made American but as an advocate of emancipation and of the rights of men in the fullest and best sense, is now united inseparably with that of Abraham Lincoln.

In his capacity of man of letters Franklin is one of the few American writers who is a cosmopolitan classic, and this in spite of the fact that he was not primarily devoted to literature. His writings have lived while those of more deliberate authors have died, mainly because whenever he took up a pen he gave us himself, not merely his actions and thoughts. The world has always been peculiarly grateful for such revelations, and it will continue to read Franklin, just as it reads Benvenuto Cellini, calling the one a sage and the other an artist, without real-

izing that it pays its highest tribute to them both as writers. This means that the secret of Franklin's power as a writer does not lie in the materials of which his numerous volumes are composed or in his verbal style, which, racy, concise, and clear though it be, could probably be paralleled in authors whom no one would think of calling truly great. Franklin is a great writer because he is Franklin acting in that capacity.

In view of this fact there is little need of specific criticism. Of his humour it is sufficient to say that it keeps a middle range between the subtlety of Lamb's and the obviousness of "Artemus Ward's." Of his lack not merely of spirituality, but of even the conception of what is meant by that term, his already-mentioned attempt to amend the Lord's Prayer may serve as an example. His scheme of reaching moral perfection throws a strong light upon his this-worldly optimism, while his general sanity of character is illustrated in hundreds of letters and in page after page of his incomplete *Autobiography*. His evenly balanced independence, fearlessness, and dignity are well brought out in his famous *Examination* before the House of Commons. Perhaps his shrewdness, his common sense, and his wit stand out singly and in unison as well in his preface to *Poor Richard's Almanac* as anywhere else, but they are obviously such basal qualities in Franklin's character that they are never absent from his self-depicting writings of whatever form or type.

We may take our leave of Franklin and of colonial literature by pointing out that the fact that the latter culminates in the former is a clear proof that the writers and writings we have been examining were worthy of at-

tention. Out of primitive, separatist beginnings an embryo nation has been formed which finds its completest representative in Franklin, and, later, its highest in Washington. After 1749, when the French began to make serious trouble west of the Alleghanies, union and independence had to come, however blind most contemporaries were to the fact, however fervently men of loyal sympathies clung to the past, however much latter-day historians with a sentimental turn may magnify and regret occasions for misunderstanding, which might indeed have been avoided yet only as one in the adage avoids the frying-pan. But the Revolutionary Epoch, in which Franklin played so serviceable a part, was made possible by the Colonial Period of which Franklin was the consummate product; and the literary historian sees this as clearly as does his political or social fellow-student. The writings of the early Virginians and New Englanders differ greatly from the writings of Franklin, but fundamentally they are all dominated by a single purpose—to instruct the rising generation in ways that would make for the greatest happiness of the greatest number. The point of view of the Plymouth chronicler is not that of the Philadelphia utilitarian, but the two are nearer to one another than Milton was to Dr. Johnson—for both Bradford and Franklin were above everything else citizens, and their writings, as well as those of their respective contemporaries, had the “citizen note.” Imaginative literature, the literature that springs from love of writing, may be almost non-existent in the Colonial Period; literary imitativeness with respect both to forms of composition and to style may be everywhere visible; but none the less did

the books written represent the men that wrote them, and none the less did they form the minds of the generations that read them, thus helping to establish the foundations of the nation that was soon to be.

Something of the future of that nation might have been guessed by any contemporary of Franklin's capable of estimating the full genius and representative character of that outcome of colonial conditions. There was not in France a more typical *philosophe* than he. Chesterfield himself was hardly a more complete man of the world, Howard hardly a more complete philanthropist. Priestley had no keener interest in science, and even Goldsmith, though he wrote more charmingly, did not write more easily. Burke was a better political philosopher, and Hume and Adam Smith were better economists, but Franklin could have left all three behind in the important matter of putting their theories into practice. He was a conversationalist worthy to be mentioned along with Johnson and Horne Tooke, and a diplomatist whom Talleyrand would not have despised. He had the public spirit of a Turgot and the tolerance of a Voltaire. Yet he was born earlier than any of these men save Chesterfield and Voltaire, and he was the product of colonial dependencies on which the old world looked down. Much of the credit that we give him is, of course, due to the genius with which Providence endowed him, but much is also due to the influences that surrounded him during his formative years.



## PART II

### THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD (1765-1788)

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#### CHAPTER VII

##### PUBLICISTS AND PREACHERS

THE period of American history which begins with the passage of the Stamp Act and ends with the adoption of the Constitution of the United States has naturally, more than any other, attracted the attention of the world at large, as well as of the Americans themselves. It is the political, military, and social features of the epoch that chiefly interest, rather than its literary productions, yet these are of considerable volume and importance. Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say that of all the contributions made by America to the world's thought, those that could least be spared are contained in the public documents and the political writings of the Revolutionary leaders.

The character of George III, the circumstances accompanying his accession to the throne, and the forced abandonment by France of her colonial empire in America were probably the chief causes of the struggle between the practically unconnected American colonies and the mother-country. Beneath these causes, however, lay far deeper ones. The colonists had increased greatly in population and wealth and, side by side with their intense

loyalty, had developed an embryonic national spirit. They had kept up irritating quarrels with the king's representatives, and in these and in their endeavours to preserve charter privileges, they had sharpened their sense of legal rights and their ability to contend for them. The almost boundless territories and the free primitive life to which they were accustomed had intensified the spirit of independence natural to them as Anglo-Saxons, and they had long since perceived that only native-born citizens could adequately comprehend colonial conditions and fill satisfactorily important offices, civil and military. In other words, only a decided attenuation of the colonial tie could, after 1763, the date of the Peace of Paris, much longer have preserved for Great Britain the larger part of her empire in the new world; when in that very year George Grenville developed his policy of enforcing the obnoxious acts of trade and of taxing the colonies in order to maintain a permanent force of soldiers among them, separation was made practically unavoidable, although in themselves the new measures involved no such departures from precedent and logic as the excited colonists were soon led to imagine. Misconceptions on both sides had much to do with the opening of the great schism which was to lead to independence, but the misconceptions of the British were the more fundamental by far since they extended to an almost entire misunderstanding of the character and the resources of the provincials.

The British ministry might have gauged the amount of resistance they were likely to encounter had they been fortunate enough to hear the five hours' harangue which in February, 1761, James Otis (1725-78), a learned Bos-

ton lawyer, who the year before had published a book bearing the peaceful title of *Rudiments of Latin Prosody*, delivered against the issuance of general search-warrants or "writs of assistance." Perhaps "harangue" is an undignified term to apply to a speech which covered the whole field of the relations between the colonies and Great Britain in such a masterly way that John Adams, who was not always wont to think well of the achievements of other men, pronounced the impassioned orator that delivered it to be "Isaiah and Ezekiel united." Yet it is clear from his unfortunate after-career that seeds of insanity had long been lurking in Otis's mind, and a distinct turbulence of style is visible in some of his pamphlets, as for example in the reply to that facile writer, Soame Jenyns, which bears the title *Considerations on Behalf of the Colonies, in a Letter to a Noble Lord* (1765). Jenyns having made use of the expression "our American colonies," Otis proceeded to ask, "Whose colonies can the creature mean?" a question which gives a fair idea of the tone in which he conducted a grave controversy, but by no means a fair idea of the way in which he disposed of the argument much relied on by Jenyns, and apparently thought strong by some modern Americans, that Birmingham, Manchester, and other large places sent no representatives to Parliament and yet bore with taxation in an uncontentious spirit. But more important perhaps than his written arguments, which did not look to separation but to a more equitable union between Great Britain and her colonies, was Otis's share in the yet more impressive argument of the Stamp Act Congress, which met in New York, in October, 1765. He had moved the calling of

this convention, and he was one of its leading members. This was practically his last service to the patriotic cause. In 1769 he was beaten and wounded by a customs official with whom he had had a controversy, and his reason never fully recovered from the shock. Yet his ruling passion was strong in his madness; he escaped surveillance to fight in the battle of Bunker Hill. Three years later he suffered the kind of death he had once desired—he was struck by lightning and instantly killed.

The most authoritative historian of American literature during the Revolutionary Epoch, the late Professor Tyler, devotes two large octavo volumes to the twenty years from 1763 to 1783. It is needless to say that the interest attaching to most of the writers and books, or rather pamphlets, so minutely discussed is historical and political rather than literary. We can therefore afford to set aside nearly all the tracts that were issued immediately after the passage of the Stamp Act and that continued to appear, though more sparingly, after the ungracious repeal of that measure. The writers in practically every case professed the greatest loyalty to their king and their mother-country, but the temper with which they marshalled their legal and constitutional strictures upon the late acts of the British ministry showed plainly that trains of thought and feeling had been started that would make any future dispute much more dangerous. The fact that among these pamphleteers were found ambitious young lawyers like John Adams of Massachusetts, afterward second President of the United States, and jurists of high standing like Daniel Dulany of Maryland, who could not finally bring himself to support actual re-



volt, showed that both the pride and the intelligence of the colonists had been stung into action, and that public discontent did not characterize obstreperous New England alone. In short, the speeches, the newspaper essays, and the pamphlets called into being by the Stamp Act proved that the colonies were more closely knit than their previous history had indicated, and that the colonial temper of mind was giving place to one that might in comparison fairly be called national.

The sermons delivered by many of the clergy proved this also, a fact not to be wondered at, for New England at least, when we remember the prominent part in affairs taken by the divines. Thus Jonathan Mayhew (1720-66) of Boston, while feeling in duty bound to rejoice that the repeal of the Stamp Act had for a time quieted the souls of his people, shortly before his own comparatively early death wrote to Otis that the colonies must not sleep because they would probably "always have some wakeful enemies in Great Britain." Why Mayhew thought this will be apparent to any reader of his long-famous *Discourse concerning Unlimited Submission*, which was delivered on the one hundredth anniversary of the execution of Charles I. Mayhew was a survival of Miltonian times, and the highest loyalty he knew was watchfulness in behalf of popular liberty, civil and religious, as he understood the terms. Like Wise before him and Witherspoon after him, he exemplified the essential connection between Calvinism and liberal, not to say radical, political theories.

The name of John Witherspoon (1722-94) brings before us one of the most remarkable men of our period. He had had a distinguished career in Scotland, both as a

preacher and as a writer, before, in 1768, he accepted the second tender of the presidency of Princeton College. His services to American education were great, especially in his introduction of the metaphysics of Reid, but his influence in politics was still greater. He threw himself heart and soul into the Revolutionary cause, was elected to the convention that framed a State constitution for New Jersey, was sent to Congress, where he signed the Declaration of Independence after chafing over the delay in passing it, served for several years on important committees, wrote against the mania for paper money, and in many other ways set an example of energetic zeal for the welfare of his adopted country, which, it is only fair to say, not a few subsequent immigrants, like Albert Gallatin and Carl Schurz, to name no others, have successfully and beneficently followed. A statue was set up to his memory in 1876, but it is to be feared that another monument to his fame, the four-volume edition of his works (1800-01) has stood him in little stead. It would not be fair perhaps to advise the general reader to attempt to peruse the sermons, the letters, the speeches, the lectures, the essays, the pamphlets, and the one or two treatises that attest the immense literary activity of this great preacher, but the student of things American and the leisurely lover of old books should not disdain them. Witherspoon had a slight trace of the genius of Swift in his composition as is proved by his ironical supplication of John Rivington, the notorious loyalist printer of New York, and better still by his *Ecclesiastical Characteristics* and his *History of a Corporation of Servants*, in which he scandalized many of the fellow-clergymen he satirized. He was or-

thodox enough, however, to be himself scandalized that a clergyman, Home, should write a play, *Douglas*, and his attitude toward play-going, and indeed all amusements, is itself amusing to-day. But perhaps the true character of the man is more clearly revealed in his essay on "Money," his sensible letters on education and marriage, and his short papers in *The Druid* on vulgarisms of speech. Witherspoon caught the "civic note" as soon as he landed in America. He wrote for the general uplifting of the good-natured, unsophisticated people who had won his heart.

With regard to the other patriotic preachers of the Revolution, specimens of whose eloquence have been collected into unread volumes, not much need be said. Some of them were more fiery in their denunciations of George III and of their Tory neighbours than was consistent with charity, but those were exciting times and the Tories retorted with equal lack of urbanity. As might have been expected, pious church-goers were given a pretty thorough course in Jewish history. The separation of the Tribes, the cursing of Meroz, and, for the loyalists at least, the careers of Absalom and Achitophel, afforded themes for learning and eloquence that must have delighted the wondering farmers and shopkeepers that heard the sermons. Even provincial and partisan credulity might well have hesitated, however, to accept literally the following statement made in an election sermon, in 1775, by the Rev. Samuel Langdon, president of Harvard: "In a general view of the present moral state of Great Britain it may be said: 'There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and

killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, their wickedness breaks out. . . . As they have increased, so have they sinned, therefore God is changing their glory into shame. The general prevalence of vice has changed the whole face of things in the British Government.' ” Had the reverend president just read Churchill's satires and taken them seriously?

If this belief in the total depravity of the British people was widely held, it is easy to account for the bitterness with which all talk of introducing into godly America that episcopal system under which such vices flourished was resisted even by clear-minded men like Mayhew. Yet from the point of view of politics they were not, after all, thoroughly illogical. The first bishop consecrated for America, Samuel Seabury, had shown long before he startled the good people of Connecticut by the sight of his episcopal robes, how close is the connection between Anglicanism and political conservatism. Seabury, as incumbent of St. Peter's, Westchester, New York, stirred by the non-importation, non-exportation agreement proposed by the First Continental Congress, issued in rapid succession (November, 1774–January, 1775) four pamphlets of remarkable acuteness and vigour which, in spite of their ascription to “A Westchester Farmer” and their homely, rural illustrations, were speedily credited not to any of the thrifty farmhouses, but to the rectory. The doughty clergyman who announced that he had a good hickory cudgel waiting for “any pragmatistical committee-gentleman” that continued “to give himself airs” was, of course, answered by many champions of the patriotic cause—by young Alexander Hamilton among others—



but the force of his onslaught upon the Revolutionary leaders could only, in the opinion of their rabble followers, be repaid by physical violence, imprisonment, and threats of direr punishment—from all of which Seabury suffered in a way that moves our indignation. There can be no question that he was as sincere as any of the patriots, and he was surely a better writer and reasoner than most of them; but the cause of political liberty owes him little, even if he was something of a martyr for the cause of freedom of speech.

Provost William Smith (1727–1803) of the College of Philadelphia was an Episcopal clergyman who took a different course from Seabury, but still represented the conservative tendencies of his Church. As a voluminous writer and an eloquent speaker, Smith attracted great attention in 1775 by strong sermons in favour of the popular cause, yet the next year, when independence was the dominant issue, he lapsed into silence. In sympathizing with his excited countrymen nearly to the point of welcoming the dissolution of the bonds of union he was doing no more than many a loyalist who, unlike him, did not take refuge in silence. The Tories, as a class, loved America, and did not love the British cabinet; their dominant predilection, however, was for the united state formed by the mother-country and her colonies. Partnership, even on unequal terms, in a grandiose whole, meant more to them than local independence. Perhaps to-day their political philosophy would have more chance to win followers than it had in 1776, although it did win many of the best citizens of the colonies; but while political union is the poet's dream and the philosopher's goal, the

historian must bear witness to the fact that up to the present time local independence has been an indispensable factor in the political development of mankind. The loyalists did not use the eye of faith, but they did use that of memory, and they clung to a country to which they were bound by ties of birth, language, laws, and religion. Thus the Rev. Jonathan Boucher in his Maryland parish would not preach a sermon in behalf of the people of Boston suffering from the effects of the Port Bill, for was he not a believer in the divine origin of government and was not the Port Bill legal? It is impossible not to respect the zeal of a disciple of Sir Robert Filmer who mounted his pulpit steps with an unpopular sermon in one hand and a pistol in the other. One would hardly recognise in him, however, the grandfather of that urbane poet the late Frederick Locker-Lampson but for the remarkable literary qualities displayed in his *View of the Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution* (London, 1797), a series of thirteen of his loyalist sermons, every one of which makes easy reading even at this late day. Yet one cannot but feel that Boucher and Seabury, and Joseph Galloway of Pennsylvania, author, among other tracts, of a dignified *Candid Examination* and perhaps the most influential of all the loyalists, had in them too much of the spirit of the younger Cato to deserve entire sympathy. But the American Tories were not all of them Stoic recalcitrants to whom sentimentalists may yield more homage than to the gods who favoured the victorious cause. One of them at least, Daniel Leonard of Boston, who signed his able letters "Massachusettensis" and had some grim fun with the patriotic eschewers of tea, was enough of an Epicurean

to wear gold lace and to travel with a chariot and pair when other American lawyers, according to the testimony of Burke, were expending their money in the purchase of a surprising number of copies of Blackstone's *Commentaries*.

Probably the most important of these students of English law was JOHN DICKINSON (1732-1808), who supplemented his legal training in Philadelphia by a three years' residence at the Middle Temple, where he may have seen Cowper. He began to write against the policy of the British ministry after the passage of the Stamp Act, his most popular performance being his *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies*, which appeared in Philadelphia newspapers in 1767, and were published in book form the next year at many places both at home and abroad. Yet on the repeal of the Stamp Act American farmers had been drinking the king's health in hard cider and undergraduates had been writing prize essays on "The Reciprocal Advantages of Perpetual Union." Why, then, should a man who, as his after-career proved, was essentially conservative have directed his assumed bucolic wisdom against the loyal cause shortly to be so unflinchingly supported by that other pseudo-farmer, the Rev. Samuel Seabury? The answer is simple. Charles Townshend had carried through his famous acts, laying a port duty, establishing resident customs commissioners, and suspending the legislature of New York. The country was on fire once more, and John Dickinson wrote his letters to secure from both sides calm consideration for questions of grave import to the cause of human liberty and to that of Anglo-Saxon unity. As we have seen, he

obtained many readers. Franklin, Voltaire, and Burke praised him highly, and a few years later he was honoured by being allowed to draft the most important of the state papers by which the first Continental Congress proved to all unprejudiced Europeans that American provincials were capable of producing statesmen worthy to rank with the best of any age and land.

His two petitions to the king and his other state papers have long caused Dickinson to be known as the Penman of the American Revolution. This sobriquet need not be denied him, even though his shrinking from actual independence soon cut him off from effective service and made room for the greater Jefferson, who was to do more to mould the political ideas and ideals of Americans than any other man. But Dickinson fought as a private in the patriotic ranks, and thus deserves higher honours than having a college named after him and his works elaborately edited. He deserves to be read, at least in his twelve *Letters from a Farmer*, which were almost as useful in accustoming the people at large to the idea of resisting Great Britain as Tom Paine's later pamphlets were in accustoming them to what was at first the heinous and terrifying idea of independence. These *Letters* are not so racy as the diatribes of Seabury, and it is needless to say that they are not masterpieces of vituperation, like the epistles of Junius; but they show considerable learning aptly applied, and they afford excellent examples of shrewd, if sometimes specious reasoning, adapted in a workmanlike fashion to the comprehension of the average reader. The opening pages remind one of a contribution to *The Rambler*, but while Dickinson's style is at times Latinistic and elaborate,



it is often homely and forcible. In its more dignified phases it was perhaps influential in establishing the canons of the slightly heavy and ornate oratorical style much used by subsequent Americans, and not yet extinct.

While Dickinson was doubtless the most important native writer upon political topics that came into notice before independence was declared, it would probably not be admissible to claim that he was as influential in bringing the colonists to the point of rupture as was the shrewd Massachusetts lawyer and politician Samuel Adams. For years Adams was engaged in local politics, with the result that he developed some of the qualities of the modern "boss," a fact which partly accounts for his comparative failure to impress himself upon the popular imagination. Dickinson's talents were a little too fine, Adams's a little too coarse, perhaps, adequately to express in enduring fashion the thoughts and aspirations of the people; but Adams, like the great Virginian orator Patrick Henry, was very near to the masses, and the more his career is studied, the more he seems to be, for New England at least, the mainspring of the complicated movements of the decade anterior to the Declaration of Independence. Nor was he, in some senses, less of a writer than of a politician. He wrote countless essays for the newspapers and drafted important documents in a style that was clear and effective. When he chose to be sarcastic, as when in 1778 he indited a short address to his Majesty's commissioners headed by the Earl of Carlisle, he proved himself an antagonist almost worthy of Swift or Junius. But Americans have always been good-natured, and they doubtless preferred the more amiable satire of Francis

Hopkinson's *Pretty Story* (1774) which, taking a hint from Arbuthnot's *History of John Bull*, developed a homely, not ineffective allegory in which the dealings of the king and Parliament, his wife, with their old farm England, and their new farm America, were set forth with considerable cleverness. This third appeal to the dominant agricultural class was very popular, and there will be occasion later to say something more about its versatile author.

We have already seen that the measures and proposals of the First Continental Congress drew forth the indignant protests of loyalists like Seabury and Leonard, the latter of whom, in such assertions as that nothing short of a miracle could gain the colonists a single battle, proved himself one of the worst of prophets. Whigs like Hamilton and John Adams at once replied with serious pamphlets and essays, and poetical satirists like Philip Freneau and John Trumbull also took the field against the Tories, who replied in kind. The most important recruit to the Revolutionary cause was, however, beyond all doubt that most remarkable compound of sheer genius and philistinism, THOMAS PAINE (1737-1809), who sailed for America, in 1774, to repair his much dilapidated fortunes. A letter from Franklin secured him employment in Philadelphia, where he made headway rapidly, especially in connection with the newly established *Pennsylvania Magazine*. Like the very different Witherspoon, Paine threw himself heart and soul into the patriotic cause, and in the task of persuading his new countrymen to accept the only rational solution of their perplexities, he found his true vocation. The former staymaker, privateersman, usher, exciseman, and tobacconist became perhaps the greatest of all pam-

phleteers, if greatness in this function be measured by ability to wield tremendous influence through force of logic and clearness of statement.

Even Paine seems at first to have thought that union might still be preserved, but Lexington and Bunker Hill showed him and other clear thinkers that independence or the prospect of slavery must be the lot of America. Early in January, 1776, his pamphlet *Common Sense* indicated by its title the kind of arguments he thought the colonists needed. He swept aside legal and constitutional *pros* and *cons*, emitted crass opinions upon the subject of government and objurgations upon kingship, made the rights of Americans appear as though they were the rights of men, attributed England's former protection of her colonies to selfish motives, emphasized the absurdity of an island's governing a continent three thousand miles away, and, in short, by the boldness and universality of his appeal swept his readers from all their moorings out into the ocean of experiment and fascinating risk. The weaknesses of the pamphlet were such as few of its readers could detect; its strong points, and they were many, appealed to all. In short, it was a work of genius of that obvious kind that does not have to wait for recognition. Within three months one hundred and twenty thousand copies had been sold in America; within six, the great Declaration had been signed.

We need not concern ourselves with Paine's style save to say that its straightforward effectiveness more than makes amends for its lack of charm, nor need we pause long over his other writings and his chequered career. His essays anterior to *Common Sense* are worth reading, espe-

cially when he discusses duelling and the abolition of slavery, with regard to which he was much ahead of his generation. His services as a soldier were far overbalanced by those he rendered as the author of *The Crisis*, the first number of which appeared on December 19, 1776, after Washington's retreat through New Jersey. "These are the times that try men's souls" were Paine's first words, but every reader of his pamphlet felt that at least one brave soul was unshaken in those dark days, and his winged words fanned in thousands of hearts the flickering fires of patriotism. Paine was no poet, no Tyrtaeus, although he did write the "Liberty Tree" and other metrical effusions; he blew no resounding "sonnet-trumpet"; but one blast upon his horn, whatever its kind, was worth, in a very literal sense, tens of thousands of men. He had grave faults, but one is almost tempted to say that the man who at this late day emphasizes them, has graver.

*The Crisis* or, as Paine afterward styled it, *The American Crisis*, perhaps to distinguish it from a British publication on which it was somewhat modelled, was published at irregular intervals down to 1783, and its author seems to have taken pleasure in dividing it into thirteen numbers—one for each colony. He was no separatist, however, for his last issue showed that he apprehended the value of union as clearly as Webster was to do fifty years later. It is perhaps too much to expect that modern readers will undertake the perusal of the entire work, but they will do well not to omit reading the splendidly plucky No. IV and the address to Sir William Howe that immediately follows it. In the course of the latter fulmination Paine had an opportunity to render America a service the value



of which is now seen to be almost inestimable. In the midst of the cabal against Washington, he showed clearly that to the manœuvres of that great general the victory over Burgoyne at Saratoga was in considerable part due; thus he lessened the influence of Gates, who was planning to supersede the indispensable commander-in-chief. For this service we can pardon illiberal statements which, with the substitution of "Whig" for "Tory," would have been worthy of Dr. Johnson himself. For example: "Every Tory is a coward; for servile, slavish, self-interested fear is the foundation of Toryism; and a man under such influence, though he may be cruel, never can be brave." Paine was partly right in asserting that Toryism was in the main founded on self-interest; appeals to it were staple arguments in the Tory tracts; but he was essentially illiberal to the loyalists and to all his other opponents, because he was not by temperament capable of examining a question calmly in all its phases. "My own line of reasoning," he wrote, "is to myself as straight and clear as a ray of light." In other words Paine was a partisan journalist of genius, but was very far from being a philosopher or a critic.

Paine's genius, according to one observer, was "in his eyes"; it is also in almost every one of his publications. His *Forester's Letters* in answer to the *Cato* letters of Provost William Smith may not support the theory that Paine was Junius, but they are not lacking in strength. America at peace not supplying him with the necessary stimulus, he repaired, as every one knows, to France, and in 1791 published his *Rights of Man* in reply to Burke's *Reflections*. It was as uneven a contest as the later one between

Kingsley and Newman, but the books that have lived have no monopoly of representing eternal verities, and it is permissible to hold something of a brief in favour of the men who have missed the world's plaudits. Neither Burke nor the British Government did well by Paine, but the principles he upheld suffered little in consequence. Nor have the assaults of the orthodox upon the notorious *Age of Reason* prevented much of the biblical criticism of Paine from seeming fairly conservative to-day, at least in point of substance. Time has not made more palatable its vulgarity, its coarseness of tone, but it has made us see that even if the man never ceased to be a philistine, he was of greater service to his race than most children of "sweetness and light" are wont to be.

Meanwhile as true a lover of humanity as Paine and a far more subtle genius had made his appearance upon the stage of affairs. This is no place to discuss the career of THOMAS JEFFERSON (1743-1826), who had the good fortune to draft that Declaration of Independence which Paine had made many a recalcitrant colonist willing to accept. In point of mere learning Jefferson, although he knew much of almost everything, perhaps had superiors among his countrymen. In point of style Franklin certainly surpassed him, and possibly Dickinson and others did. In point of nobility of character Washington far outshone him, and, as we may see in the letters and addresses of the latter, great character almost suffices alone to make great literature. But in mobility of mind and in that imaginative sympathy which enables a man to comprehend the thoughts and aspirations of a whole nation and thus to mould them, Jefferson had no superior during his long life and seems to

have had none since. Nearly all the great Revolutionary statesmen have left voluminous literary effects worthy of preservation, but the lover of pure literature may, as a rule, leave them severely alone. He may, if he will, treat in this cavalier fashion the long series of Jefferson's letters, which of course stretch far beyond our present period, but, if he does, he will miss the fascination that attends the study of one of the most elusive characters that ever played a great part in affairs. He will miss also the profit and pleasure that attend the study of documents which mirror, as it were, the aspirations and ideals of an important and thoroughly interesting age. Jefferson was a clumsy letter-writer in comparison with some contemporary Englishmen, but none of them wielded so influential a pen. None of them could have made equally ardent political disciples out of staid New England Puritans and reckless Kentucky backwoodsmen. This Jefferson did, and he held them to him with links stronger than steel, and he holds their great-grandchildren to-day. He had many enemies, and attempts have often been made to minimize his importance, but he remains the most fascinatingly perplexing character in American history—a man thoroughly in sympathy with his own generation, yet mentally far ahead of it; indeed, in some important particulars, far ahead of our own.

As a writer Jefferson suffers because, unlike Franklin, he has left no masterpiece in the shape of a book. His *Notes on Virginia*, written in 1782, while interesting and valuable can scarcely be said to possess literary importance. Yet in its way the *Declaration* is a literary masterpiece, because, in spite of its fallacies and its exaggerations,

it is alive with emotion. It is rhetorical, but because a useful distinction may be drawn between the rhetorical and the poetical elements in a composition is no reason for using the former epithet invariably in a derogatory sense. Jefferson wrote, and his fellow-revolutionists read, in a glow of true emotion. In another epoch the diction would have been simpler, the cadences perhaps more harmonious, but no other epoch can show a document which has more adequately fulfilled the purposes for which it was composed or which more unerringly appeals to the finest of all human instincts—the instinct for freedom. To criticise it verbally, as one might a sonnet, would be pedantic; to criticise its substance minutely, as one might a deed of bargain and sale, would be almost if not quite fatuous.

Jefferson's intense faith in the justice of his cause and in the fine qualities of the American people gave the *Declaration* its thrilling and, despite later critics, its original ring, but events did not seem at first to justify his optimism. After the novelty of the situation wore off, the new nation resembled not so much a "strong and puissant" youth as a group of petulant infants. If the most prudent and resolute of men had not been at the head of the army, the Revolution would probably have collapsed. And even after peace was assured it looked as if the frail Confederacy would collapse. The insufficient Articles of Confederation were not ratified by all the States until 1781, and in the meantime the individual commonwealths were giving few proofs of their fitness to govern themselves. Congress became little more than a body of plenipotentiaries deprived of plenary powers. Its requisitions upon



the States were disregarded and the latter disregarded the dictates of equity in their legislation, especially in the matter of public and private debts. Anarchy seemed to be at hand, and leaders like Washington, Hamilton, and Madison felt that something must be done at once to prevent national ruin. They finally succeeded in having the great convention of 1787 assembled at Philadelphia, which after months of secret deliberation offered to the country the Constitution of the United States. Its framers did not regard this as an inspired document, as some of their posterity have done, nor did they fancy that their grave body would be compared with the head of Zeus in labour with Minerva. They constructed, as far as possible out of British precedents, what they hoped would prove a working instrument of government, and time has been more than usually considerate of them and their labours.

Many of their fellow-citizens were by no means considerate, however, and the task of defending the new Constitution proved to be as difficult as that of making it. But in this task the leaders, especially Hamilton and Madison, were no less successful. Hamilton planned a series of letters or essays to be published over the signature "Publius" in two New York newspapers for the purpose of persuading the citizens of that important town and State, as well as of the country at large, to withdraw their opposition from the only available plan of union. He secured the assistance of Madison, and to a much less extent that of John Jay, and for upward of seventy-five numbers, from October 27, 1787, to April 2, 1788, the trio continued their patriotic work. When collected in the latter year as *The Federalist*, these famous papers were increased to

the number of eighty-five. Both in periodical and in book form they won great applause, but it does not seem that they were nearly so successful as Paine's pamphlets in influencing public opinion. Considering their argumentative and expository character and the fact that none of the authors was Paine's equal as a popular stylist, this result is not surprising, especially in view of the great complexity of the interests involved. Yet as these letters furnished arguments that won votes for the Constitution in the several State conventions that had to ratify that instrument—particularly in Madison's State, Virginia, where a strong opposition, led by Patrick Henry, made the debates most interesting—it is perhaps impossible really to determine their immediate influence. Their permanent influence upon all later American and some foreign publicists is open to no doubt.

The authorship of several of the numbers of *The Federalist* is in dispute, the evidence in favour of Madison being probably better than that in favour of Hamilton. As Hamilton designed the series, and was altogether the abler man of the two, it seems fair to give him a very high place among the writers of the Revolution, although his chief title to fame is as a statesman of large resources and almost unrivalled administrative capacity. His associate James Madison wrote more as a painstaking scholar, but he, too, takes a high rank among his contemporaries both as a publicist and as a statesman, and perhaps approaches the best type of solid, well-trained, and widely informed British statesman more nearly than does any other American. As for *The Federalist* itself, no praise can be too high that does not, like some American praise for it, lift

it into comparison with compositions not in its class. As a work of the practical American intellect, which can always bring logic, wide and accurate information, and common sense to bear on a given problem, and as a concrete illustration of that civic spirit which we have found so characteristic of American literature as a whole, the book has probably no superior. It is idle, however, to compare it, as is sometimes done, with the works of a philosopher like Aristotle or of a prose-poet like Milton. The young American citizen who wishes to understand the nature of the government his ancestors framed should at least read *The Federalist* if he does not find the necessary time and interest to read widely in the literature of the Revolutionary Period, in its orations, its sermons, its pamphlets, its state papers, full as they are of the doubts and fears and aspirations of a new nation. The young citizen who wishes to preserve and increase in his own soul the noble love of liberty which made that nation and *The Federalist* possible, will do well to go first to the prose of Milton.

## CHAPTER VIII

### POETS AND MISCELLANEOUS WRITERS

ALTHOUGH it is proper to emphasize the essentially political character of the literature of the Revolutionary Period by giving prior and separate treatment to the publicists and the partisan preachers, it must not be supposed that the verse writers, the historians, and the miscellaneous authors of the epoch were much, if at all, less interested in the great political crisis through which America was passing. Their work, however, shows on the whole more of literary quality than does that of the former group, and hence is differentiated from it in point of style and to some extent in point of substance.

The literary quality displayed in his "Lines on the [Boston] Massacre," by James Allen, a modest bachelor merchant of the Massachusetts capital, is not specially apparent. Indeed it is altogether likely that the rude ballads and songs which were produced in considerable numbers throughout the colonies after hostilities began were more successful than the elaborate efforts of Allen and other sophisticated bards in nerving the Continental troops to the grim task before them. Candour compels the admission that these songs suggest London broadsides rather than Scotch ballads, but this fact made



very little difference to the patriots who sang them about their camp-fires, or to the Tories who, at their various gatherings, sang such effusions as consorted with their sentiments. Here and there an ambitious versifier imitated cleverly "Admiral Hosier's Ghost" or Drayton's "Battle of Agincourt," but, as a rule, the balladists used no specific models and were content with rough vigour, which, in the satiric vein at least, they certainly displayed.

There were, however, a few writers who displayed something approximating art. Among these should be enrolled the loyalist Joseph Stansbury (1750-1809), who could not forget his native England, and both wrote and suffered for the unpopular cause. He rarely struck a true poetic note, save perhaps in the lines to his wife written while he was in exile in Nova Scotia, but he was a born songster, endowed with humour and satiric power, and quite shrewd enough to seize upon occasions proper to the exercise of his not always proper muse. His verses on the United States written after peace was concluded show that he was without vindictiveness, and his gay anapæsts are a distinct relief to the student who plods his way through the far from gay literature of the period. Stansbury's name is usually coupled with that of the Rev. Jonathan Odell (1737-1818) of New Jersey, who, however, despite his birthday ode to King George, was less a lyrist than a satirist of the Churchill kind. His elaborate poems entitled "The Congratulation" and "The Feu de Joie" are readable and vigorous, as one may judge from this couplet taken from the former:

Back to his mountains Washington may trot ;  
*He* take this city ?—yes, when ice is hot.

Patriotic counterparts of these loyalist verse-writers may be discovered in Hopkinson, who was recently mentioned, and in Philip Freneau, the only genuine poet of consequence produced in America before the nineteenth century. Francis Hopkinson (1737-91) is usually given a conspicuous place among Revolutionary writers, and deserves it for his versatility, for his creditable acquaintance with science and the arts, and for his services to the patriot cause. He signed the Declaration of Independence and helped to make it effective by such performances as *A Pretty Story* and *The Political Catechism*. But while interest attaches to his career as well as to that of his father, Thomas, who helped Franklin to study electricity, and of his son Joseph (1770-1842), who wrote the popular lyric "Hail Columbia" (1798), it may not be heretical to declare that the little judge with the head "not bigger than a large apple," who composed music for his own songs, played the harpsichord, and drew crayon portraits of "reigning belles," is of more consequence as a pleasant figure in a contentious epoch than as the author of the three volumes of his "Works" that were published in his native Philadelphia the year after his death. Apart from his humorous ballad "The Battle of the Kegs," written in 1778 on the putative alarm created among the British by some charged kegs set floating in the Delaware River, Hopkinson's verse is of little value. It was chiefly inspired by contemporary English poets; indeed he was so affected by the Miltonic revival as actually to attempt uncalled-for variations upon "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso." These metrical results of an early visit to England are of much less consequence than his prose criticisms of

his British cousins, whom he sharply distinguished from the changed race that had grown up on the other side of the Atlantic. We have already said enough about his *Pretty Story*, and can afford to dismiss summarily his essays, his "visions," his dialogues, and his numerous squibs. Franklin, whom he seemed to follow at a vast distance, did such trifles much better, and the reader may be advised to take his Hopkinson in anthological sips rather than in a three-volume draught.

When the careful edition of Freneau's writings that is now preparing sees the light, it will not be necessary for the general reader to feel that he must not skip a line, but he will probably conclude that he is in the presence of the first writer of American verse of whom it may be truly said that he had an affluence of talents and some traces of genius. PHILIP FRENEAU was born in New York, of Huguenot parentage, on January 2, 1752; he was found dead on a New Jersey road, December 18, 1832. During this long life the world had seen many changes, and Freneau himself had been not a little buffeted. He graduated at Princeton in 1771, having had as classmate and roommate James Madison, who was anything but a poet and the sport of fortune. He first tried school-teaching for a short time, as assistant to his classmate H. H. Brackenridge, himself destined to be something of a man of letters. Then he read law, but abandoned this career for newspaper work in Philadelphia in the interest of the Revolutionary party. Independence not being declared soon enough to suit him, he accepted the invitation of a friend living in Jamaica and sailed thither, probably in the early part of 1776. On the voyage the mate died,

and Freneau took his place, thus acquiring nautical knowledge that was later to stand him in good stead. In the West Indies he seems to have led a somewhat idyllic life, visiting various islands and writing verses—the latter occupation having been fascinating to him from his earliest youth. The news of the Declaration was slow in reaching him, and it was not until after two years had elapsed that he returned to the United States. His biographers are exasperatingly vague about all his movements, but it appears to be certain that he helped Brackenridge in the latter's short-lived venture *The United States Magazine*, and that he did some practical service to his country by taking out letters of marque. In 1780 he had a ship built for him which was captured by the British on her first voyage. Freneau, who curiously enough was booked as a passenger, was confined with the officers and crew in a noisome prison-ship lying in the port of New York. He has left two accounts of his sufferings, one ranking among his most important poems, the other being merely a plain prose narrative rather remarkable for its freedom from rancour. After his release, in July, 1780, he continued the rôle of patriotic poet which he had unremittingly filled for some years, and at the close of hostilities he still found subjects for his satirical muse in notorious loyalists like the printers Rivington and Hugh Gaine. But besides writing for the newspapers and publishing collections of his poems and miscellanies in 1786 and 1788, he made voyages as commander of a brig, sometimes as far as Madeira. In 1789, however, he married, and two years later undertook the editorship of *The National Gazette*, at Philadelphia. He also secured through



Jefferson a small post in the Department of State—"the clerkship for foreign languages"—the alliance between the politician and the editor bringing much odium upon both. It is needless to describe how Freneau made his paper a thorn in the sides of Hamilton and Washington. After two years of controversy he sought his home at Mount Pleasant, N. J., where, at a press of his own, he published a complete edition of his poems (1795). He also did some translating, printed an almanac, and conducted for a year a small weekly sheet. But his "couple of hundred acres of an old sandy patrimony" could not content him, and after a newspaper venture in New York, he took once more to the sea. His last voyage seems to have carried him as far as Calcutta, and he might have ended his days as a sailor had not the year 1809 seen the enactment of laws greatly restricting American commerce. Freneau marked the same year by superintending a new issue of his poems, and when the War of 1812 was over he celebrated the event by two additional volumes of verse in which he praised the naval heroes over whom his countrymen had almost gone wild. This was his last performance of any note, unless it be a performance of note for a satirist and a partisan journalist to grow old gracefully. His tragic death was in keeping, however, with the stormier portions of his career. Returning late from a gathering of friends, he refused the attendance naturally proffered to a man of eighty, lost his way in the snow, and fell, breaking his hip. The next morning he was found dead.

Although Freneau's reputation as a writer is steadily rising, we shall be justified in omitting to consider his

prose, which, when not strictly journalistic, consists of imitative essays and sketches published both serially and in collected form over the pen-name of "Robert Slender." Versatile and effective his pen surely was in whatever it undertook, but it was inspired only when it ran swiftly from verse to verse. Nor was it by any means always inspired then. When the comparatively large mass of his poetry is examined as a whole, and judgment is passed upon it, and not, as is usually done, upon the best pieces of his two earlier volumes of 1786 and 1788, it becomes apparent that it is idle to treat Freneau as a precursor of Wordsworth and as a poet of notably original genius. Versatility, power, and a few fine touches will undoubtedly be discovered, and it will seem fair to endeavour to lift him from the ranks of his obscure versifying contemporaries, but it will seem equally fair to link him with his British exemplars of the eighteenth century. His satires, his translations, his memorial verses, his descriptions of the private tutor and the city poet, his lines on a dish of tea, or an empty tobacco-box, or Amanda's singing-bird, his odes, his apologues in octosyllabics—these are staple products of the eighteenth-century muse. Philanders and Myrtyllas fair were no strangers to this satirist and sailor, and what is more to the point, his latest volumes, those of 1815, did not as a whole prove that he had developed beyond the point reached by him when he was thirty-six years old. Germs of originality and strength had been in him from the first, and he had achieved genuine success as a satirist and occasional triumphs as a poet; but he had not attained greatness, and interest is probably all that his latter-day admirers will succeed in

arousing for his works. These may now be examined in a cursory fashion.

His earlier pieces were necessarily immature, but showed the dawnings of imaginative power and a choice of subjects rather unusual in a young American. He was interested in Jonah, the Pyramids, Sappho and Phaon, Abelard, and of course in "The Rising Glory of America." Rather ambitious poems, descriptive and satiric, were attempted by him shortly after he left college, and when he flung himself into the Revolutionary struggle as a satirist on the Whig side, he was prepared to do useful work. Dryden and Churchill were his models so far as vigour and coarseness were concerned, but he seems to have made more use of anapæsts than any of his British prototypes. In other words, Tyler's statement that Freneau's characteristic measure was the iambic, while true enough of him and most other poets, obscures the fact that he was one of the earliest Americans to perceive the effectiveness of such swinging lines as are to be found in his "Libera Nos, Domine" of 1775:

From the valliant Dunmore, with his crew of banditti,  
Who plunder Virginians at Williamsburg city.

From the scoundrel, Lord North, who would bind us in chains,  
From a dunce of a king who was born without brains,  
The utmost extent of whose sense was to see  
That reigning and making of buttons agree.

It is fair to add immediately that King George and most of his favourite ministers and generals were sufficiently damned by Freneau in orthodox heroics, and that his praise of American worthies was almost equally hyperbolic. Perhaps his strongest poem is "The British Pris-

on-Ship," which reminds us of the fact that both the Revolutionary and the civil wars produced quite a mass of gruesome prison literature. Freneau's short cantos have the merits of intense passion and of a vivid realism rare at the time, and their scathing tone was probably justified by the brutal treatment he received, but one turns with pleasure to his long effusion, "The Beauties of Santa Cruz," which is full of genuine delight in the charms of tropical nature expressed in crude but often impressive verses. More attractive, also, is the curious, weird poem "The House of Night," which suggests the fact that other Americans besides Brockden Brown, Hawthorne, and Poe have been touched by the love of the morbid and mysterious. But it is to short occasional pieces rather than to elaborate efforts of any kind that Freneau's admirers point, in order to sustain their contention that he was a true, if limited poet.

Such poems are the charming "Wild Honeysuckle," which first appeared in the volume of 1788; "The Indian Student"; "The Indian Burying-Ground," characterized by insight and imagination; and the nobly simple stanzas to the soldiers that fell at Eutaw Springs. These and a few other pieces, such as "To a Honey Bee" and "On the Ruins of a Country Inn," are the poems in which Freneau shows his slight genius rather than his considerable talents. Yet when all is said that can be in favour of these high-water marks of his poetry, it is easy to agree with one of his sanest critics in holding that the contrast between such a poem as "The Indian Burying-Ground" and such a poem as the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is the contrast between good literature and great.



It is not pleasant, however, to take leave of so interesting a man and poet with an unfavourable comparison with one of the rarest of poetical spirits. It is more in accordance with custom to emphasize the fact that neither Scott nor Campbell disdained to borrow an excellent line each from Freneau, but it should be remembered that the latter's general debt to his British predecessors would have warranted larger reprisals than their heirs have thought fit to make. The account will be fully balanced if modern readers on both sides of the Atlantic will give Freneau credit for a rare sympathy with Nature, for affluence of satiric power, for versatility, and for perhaps half a dozen admirable though not flawless lyrics.

While Freneau was the ablest satirist produced during our period, he was not the most popular. The *McFingal* of JOHN TRUMBULL (1750-1831) long continued, both at home and abroad, to be considered America's masterpiece in a class of literature more esteemed then than now. In some respects this verdict was justified, for Trumbull's imitation of *Hudibras* was more elaborate than any satire of Freneau's and better suited to the popular taste. Its author, who was born at Waterbury, Connecticut, represented an excellent family, and was a marvel of infant precocity. It is stated that at the age of two he could repeat all the verses in that exemplary compilation *The New England Primer*, as well as all of Dr. Watts's *Divine Songs for Children*. Other astounding stories are told of his later achievements, so that one is not surprised to find him at the age of seven sitting in the lap of a boy of twelve and passing the examination for entrance into Yale College. His father, however,

kept him at home for six years, during which time he read enormously. In 1763 he entered Yale, became bachelor in due course, and then remained three years longer as a candidate for the master's degree. There can be little question that both he and his brilliant classmate Timothy Dwight were as well read in the classics and in general literature as any of their youthful contemporaries in England; but their careers proved that they both belonged to the class of men who so overflow with ability for the benefit of those who live with them as to leave comparatively little for the benefit of those who live after them. Trumbull, indeed, must have partly disappointed his friends, for his success as a lawyer and judge, while in American parlance "eminent," was not extraordinary. Not many men, however, would have had the energy to remove at the age of seventy-five to Detroit, then almost in the wilderness. Here he died six years later.

Trumbull began his literary career with various essays, some printed in the newspapers, some left in manuscript. With Dwight, Joel Barlow, and other worthies shortly to be mentioned, he was ambitious to remove from America the reproach of literary sterility; and when, in 1771, he became a tutor in Yale he must have known few idle moments. Some of the metrical essays of the period were deemed good enough for inclusion in the final edition of his poems, published nearly fifty years later, but the critic is charitable who sees in them anything more than callow imitations of Gray and other British models. Nor was his early elaborate production *The Progress of Dulness*, the first part of which dates from 1772, markedly American in tone, although the satire was based on his

experience of the limitations of education and culture in the colonies. The octosyllabics in which he described the careers of his characters would seem quite in place in the volumes of Chalmers, and some of the couplets are good enough to make one read on in hopes of finding others.

And plodding on in one dull tone,  
Gain ancient tongues and lose their own.

People and priest full well agree,  
For why—they know no more than he.

For he that drinks till all things reel,  
Sees double, and that's twice as well.

How far we are, especially in the last couplet, from Cotton Mather, that other youthful prodigy!

Late in 1773 Trumbull went to Boston to study law in the office of John Adams. The misadventure of the tea ships and other exciting political events of his year of residence turned his thoughts away from ill-educated New England youths and maidens, and his verse took on a savage tone. On his return to New Haven he began writing *McFingal*, the first instalment of which was published at Philadelphia, in January, 1776. It is needless to describe this once immensely popular production further than to say that its machinery is simple and that its chief interest—at least in the first portion—centres in the long speeches made by its Tory Scotch-Irish hero, and by his opponent, Honorius, in whom Trumbull may have intended to represent John Adams. These speeches appealed greatly to contemporary Whig readers, but latter-day readers could doubtless spare some of the town-meeting arguments with their coarse partisanship and frequent

reference to persons now of small importance. Yet this is the fate of satires of greater merit than Trumbull's vigorous performance. He completed his poem, in 1782, by letting *McFingal*, who had been previously awarded the customary decoration of tar and feathers, make an unconscionably long speech before effecting his escape and exit.

With regard to the literary value of what is probably the most representative production of the Revolution apart from the work of the publicists, critics are somewhat at variance. Some insist upon Trumbull's resemblance to Butler, others are inclined to emphasize the points of difference between the two. There are such points, and it seems fairly plain that he was also indebted to Churchill. Yet it is by no means certain that emphasizing these differences does not set in relief the American's defects. Admirers of *McFingal* are on surer ground when they declare that its great popularity both at home and abroad could hardly have been gained, at least outside of America, if it had been merely a clever imitation. It is perhaps safe to conclude that while far from being a masterpiece, it is equally far from being a copy, a cento, or an entirely ephemeral production. It shows a wide and digested knowledge of the classics and of the better British poets, and while it lacks the *verve* and the inexhaustible wit of Butler's performance, it is in many passages hardly inferior to that in pointedness and in its command of the Hudibrastic verse-form. It is a notorious fact that some of Trumbull's couplets have passed for Butler's—for instance, the often-quoted

A thief ne'er felt the halter draw  
With good opinion of the law.



The man who rhymed "committees" with "Bohea teas," and declared

Behold ! the world shall stare at new sets  
Of home-made earls in Massachusetts

was not lacking in ingenuity, even if one is forced to admit that many of his rhymes were as completely wretched as his style was imitative. On the whole, if Trumbull did not create an American literature or live up to his youthful promise, he succeeded in influencing his times and in bequeathing to posterity a burlesque mock-heroic that need not be superciliously disregarded.

It is to the credit of Yale College that by far the most important contributions made to American literature during the first quarter of a century of national existence were due to its graduates. It is true that none of these men now ranks as an important writer, and that no poem or book of real consequence to the general reader was produced. Yet it is none the less clear that the recognition by influential citizens of the public nature of the calling of the man of letters was serviceable in preventing the people at large from sinking to the level of their factious politicians, and in rendering possible the literary progress of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. It is easy to treat with contempt these Connecticut amateurs, especially the coterie known as the Hartford Wits, but the light of any sort of beacon on a dark night is a cause for thankfulness, if it be not an *ignis fatuus*.

The leaders of the so-called Hartford Wits were Trumbull and Barlow, Dr. Lemuel Hopkins, Col. David Humphreys, and, later, Richard Alsop and Theodore Dwight, a brother of the noted Timothy. The designa-

tion in strictness applies rather to the younger members of the group, but all of them may be described as American counterparts of the satirists who were writing *The Rolliad* and *The Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin*. They did not equal their British models, but they at least did good service in opposing the craze for bad currency and debt legislation in *The Anarchiad* and the provincial fondness for inflated language in *The Echo*. The first-named production appeared from time to time in a newspaper and purported to be a series of extracts from an ancient epic found in ruins older than those of Palmyra. Its antiquity and prophetic acumen astonished some credulous persons, but its clever parody of the close of the *Dunciad*, apropos of the absurd chaos represented by the abortive uprising in Massachusetts known as "Shays' Rebellion," and its attacks on certain Rhode Island demagogic politicians, won favour in more intelligent quarters. Its *disjecta membra* were collected and published for political purposes at the opening of the civil war, and if it cannot be said that their latter end was as successful as their former, it may at least be averred that worse occasional poetry has been written both in America and elsewhere. Of the later *Echo* it must suffice to say that its political sections were directed against the Jeffersonian democracy, which suffered no harm whatsoever. With the exception of Barlow, Colonel Humphreys, who was an aide-de-camp to Washington, and first American minister to Portugal, is practically the only one of these versifiers now remembered. His bent for letters and especially poetry did credit to his heart, but almost to that alone. He did his best for literature and "literary as-

pirants," however, although with all his efforts he did not surpass the amateur of the group, Richard Alsop, who made translations from the French and Italian poets, and in his lengthy effusion "The Charms of Fancy" managed to imitate both Akenside and Pope.

The wits of the Connecticut town yield in importance and interest to the Congregational pastor of a village of the same State. TIMOTHY DWIGHT was born at Northampton, Massachusetts, May 14, 1752. He was very nearly as precocious as Trumbull, and being a grandson of Jonathan Edwards, he was of course sent to Yale. It is worth noting that, like many another American provincial before and since, Dwight was afflicted with what was practically a monomania for intellectual acquisition and distinction. Perhaps the physical magnitude of America and the comparatively uncramped nature of the life led by its inhabitants account in the main for this phenomenon, an explanation which is all the more satisfactory from the fact that as the older States have advanced in culture this tendency, in a milder form, has been more visible in the newer. However this may be, it would seem fair to believe that more Americans would have attained lasting success as writers and scholars if their native genius had been restrained during its period of immaturity by the wholesome checks imposed by old-world culture instead of being encouraged to grow wild by provincial plaudits.

Dwight was made a tutor at Yale along with Trumbull in 1771. He at once began to compose his epic *The Conquest of Canaan*, which he finished in three years but did not publish until 1785. In 1777 he became an army chaplain, a position which he filled with great

success, especially as he was able to furnish the soldiers with patriotic songs. Of these the only one of consequence is that entitled "Columbia," which had the merit of voicing the almost boundless aspirations of the epoch.

Columbia, Columbia, to glory arise,  
The queen of the world and the child of the skies

is amusing only to sophisticated persons; the people of the Revolutionary Epoch took it seriously and so do many Americans to-day. He was forced by his father's death to resign from the army in 1778, and for five years helped his mother to manage her estate, showing the energy and good sense of a practical American, and reminding one of the Scotchman Wilkie who, like Dwight, managed a farm and wrote an unreadable epic. He was urged to become a politician, but preferred the Church, which still held sway in New England, and in 1783 became pastor at Greenfield, Connecticut, where he shone as a preacher and also conducted a successful school, besides finding time to write much of his poetry. In 1795, as successor to the learned Dr. Ezra Stiles, he was made president of Yale, which was then crippled financially. He at once gave proof of his great executive capacity and raised the college to its proper place, finding time also to teach and preach and write, as well as to play the part of mentor and oracle to the whole region. He was in many ways the first of the great modern college presidents; if his was the day of small things, he nevertheless did so many of them and did them so well that he deserves admiration. The stories told of the way he confuted college infidels, directed workmen who were digging a well, and dictated sermons and letters



together are tributes to his power which may be subject to discount, but which bear witness to his energetic personality. When he died, in 1817, he almost seemed to leave a gap in the solar system.

The excision of the entire body of his writings from American literature would not now be attended with much pain or loss of vitality to the patient. Still one would like to keep his hymn "I love thy Kingdom, Lord," and the posthumous four volumes of his *Travels in New England and New York*. These form an encyclopædia, in over two hundred letters to an imaginary English correspondent, giving records of local history and statistics picked up by the patriotic president during his summer travels in his gig. Truth to say, however, this monumental work would be more interesting if the dignified author had thought proper to abandon the canons of what he considered elegant English. His *Theology Explained and Defended*, in five volumes, and his sermons have received high praise, but it would be hazardous to assert that they are much read to-day. His poems are equally little read, but while they obviously do not deserve the encomiums once showered on them, they are illustrative of the literary aspirations of their epoch and are worthy of the student's attention. *The Conquest of Canaan* is of course unreadable, but its couplets and its purple passages of description are up to the level of the eighteenth-century artificial epic. This was perceived by Cowper who reviewed favourably a work for which his own publisher, Johnson, was responsible in England. The great British poet could not resist the temptation to point out the tendency of transatlantic English to decline in purity, but while doing this he

unfortunately showed his ignorance of the history of his own language. Dwight, in his preface, defended his neologisms with considerable acuteness, but he could not defend his poem from a charge he did not anticipate—that of unmitigated dulness. It is needless to discuss this charge, for it would be hard to find any contradiction of it within the past hundred years, but it may not be amiss to remark that the theme showed some originality and that in few epics do morning and evening strolls taken by the hero and heroine play such an important part as in this Connecticut pastor's, who may have been unconsciously influenced by the free, pleasant intercourse of the Yankee youths and maidens about him. It was in the interest of these ingenuous souls that Dwight published anonymously his next poem, *The Triumph of Infidelity* (1788), in which he employed his irony against the enemies of the Christian faith. His couplets were not lacking in the power which narrowness often gives, but he displayed his provincialism in an absurd fashion by dedicating his fatuous effusion to that wittiest of mortals, Voltaire. His acquaintance with British poetry was vouched for by the last of his elaborate poems, *Greenfield Hill* (1794), an exemplary production which owed its plan to Denham and Pope and in each of its parts imitated the style of a favourite poet. It is not so unreadable as Dwight's epic, but its good passages are balanced by grievous defects, as when we find a denunciation of slavery concluding with the couplet

Why streams the life-blood from that female's throat ?  
She sprinkled gravy on a guest's new coat !

Yet if the corypheus of post-Revolutionary literature was not above such a lapse as this, he was nevertheless a great

and good character whose memory it is a pleasure and a duty to keep as green as one can.

Among John Trumbull's minor productions are certain lines to Messrs. Dwight and Barlow on the projected publication of their poems in London, December, 1775. The Revolutionary War supervening, the projected publication was postponed, but the loyal friend of the frustrated poets doubtless saw no reason for modifying the following prophecy:

Fame shall assent, and future years admire  
Barlow's strong flight, and Dwight's Homeric fire.

We have seen how the years have treated Dwight's epic; it will not take us long to learn how they have tired the wings of Barlow's muse.

JOEL BARLOW (1754-1812) was born at Reading, Connecticut. Beginning at Dartmouth College, he was graduated from Yale in 1778, where he delivered "a poetical composition in English." Then he served as army chaplain enjoying the favour of leading officers and writing sprightly letters to his lady-love, in one of which we get glimpses of ill-fated Major André. He was also diligently labouring over a "philosophical poem" on the subject of Columbus that was designed to make both himself and America great. Other facts of his early career worthy of record are that having been secretly married in 1781, he gave up the ministry, settled at Hartford as lawyer and editor, continued to write poetry, revised a psalm book which was used until his theology and politics became obnoxiously liberal, and finally, in 1787, published his *Vision of Columbus*, a performance of nearly five thousand lines

and perhaps as many applauding readers, American, British, and French. Then he sailed to France as agent for the Scioto Land Company, a corporation destined to have a scandalous history. Barlow succeeded only too well in persuading Frenchmen that the wilds of America were an earthly paradise, but it does not appear that he should bear the opprobrium that attaches to some of his fellow-promoters.

During his stay in Paris he associated with many of the leaders of revolutionary thought, and soon shook off the Puritan orthodoxy as well as the political conservatism he had inherited. Then he spent many months in England, consorting with Dr. Price, Horne Tooke, and other "friends of liberty," and writing political pamphlets and books. His *Advice to the Privileged Orders* had the honour of being suppressed, and its author was proscribed. The French gave him the reward of citizenship, and in return he gave them political advice and exhortations that were not very effective. Then he devoted himself to commerce and speculation and made a neat fortune. At the close of 1795 he set out for Algiers, on a mission to the piratical Dey, during the course of which he secured the release of American prisoners and rendered other services to his native land at the cost of great personal sacrifices. After this patriotic labour was performed, he settled down to literary work in Paris—a quiet but interested spectator of the unfolding career of Napoleon. He translated his friend Volney's *Ruins*, took voluminous notes for a never-written history of America from the true republican point of view, and wrote sundry political tracts. He also rendered another service to his



country by helping to avert the war with France that was so imminent in 1798. In the spring of 1805 he ended his exile, which probably had not, after all, been a great trial to him. He had seen much of men and events, and had cherished dreams of future renown while slowly elaborating his *Vision of Columbus* into an orthodox epic.

America had in many ways outgrown Barlow during his long absence, but his fellow-Republicans greeted him with banquets and receptions even if the Federalists reviled him. He took up his residence near the infant city of Washington, where he unsuccessfully tried to found a great national institution—as vain an old-world scheme as the old-world epic with a new-world subject which he published in a sumptuous, much-embellished quarto, under the orthodox title of *The Columbiad* (1807). More interesting were the letters he wrote in its defence, and on other topics, especially one in which he showed how far he rose above the prejudices of his provincial countrymen by guarding from slander the memory of Thomas Paine. He himself should have risen above slander when, in 1811, the complicated relations of America with Napoleon having required the presence in Europe of a negotiator familiar with Continental diplomacy and capable of following the tortuous policy of the Emperor, he accepted with regret Madison's commission for the arduous post. He laboured diligently and accomplished some good results, but was foiled at last by the swift movements of Napoleon and of death. After having journeyed to meet the Emperor at Wilna he became involved in the horrors of the retreat from Moscow, and died in a little Polish village on December 24, 1812. His body was suffered to remain in Poland,

and in America only his fellow Democratic-Republicans paid his memory the respect that is due to unselfish patriotism. The memorial lines written by his friend the notorious Helen Maria Williams were not good enough to preserve his name and fame for British readers, nor could the French tributes immortalize him; but at least his memory perished decently abroad. In his native land historians and critics have more or less used him as a political and literary scarecrow.

It is plain, even from this meagre sketch, that few men of letters have ever had such an interesting career, but it is equally plain that Barlow, like many of his countrymen, was a man of large practical talents which he could turn successfully in almost every direction except poetry. He could write a really excellent letter, his publications on political subjects were creditable, he was capable of holding his own in the most cultivated society, he could deal with men and affairs, but when he wrote poetry his practicality not only could not help him but actually deserted him. Yet like Dwight he acquired considerable dexterity in managing the heroic couplet, and was capable of composing passages of dignity and strength. Like Dwight, however, he was almost totally lacking in the faculty of self-criticism. It would have been much better for his fame if he had not challenged the admiration of a later and slightly more sophisticated generation by revamping and expanding a poem that had won him consideration. Indeed, if he had refrained from the ostentation of a magnificently printed quarto, all might not have been lost. But even in the America of 1807 there were limits to people's patience; much more in Europe,

where it was the fashion to snub American pretensions. Yet it must be urged in Barlow's favour that his numerous changes and expansions probably did not hurt his poem so much as the critics have maintained. A careful comparison of *The Vision of Columbus* with *The Columbiad* will show that the added sixth book and the chief expanded passages, which deal with events in the Revolution and with the glories of republican liberty, had not a great deal to do with the failure of the colossal epic. Readers probably did not speculate why the episode of Capac and Zamor had been lugged into either poem, or why Barlow, in the light of his advanced opinions, should have joined with Plato in believing that Homer's "existence has really proved one of the signal misfortunes of mankind." They ranked *The Columbiad* among such misfortunes for much the same reason that "phenomenal successes" in fiction are so ranked by any one who is doomed to read them five years after publication. Twenty years is a period long enough to allow for the shrinkage of a more inflated reputation than Barlow's had ever been. This, and not his pathetic elaboration of his grandiose performance, seems to be the true reason why his "philosophical poem" that had delighted his own generation proved a veritable nightmare to the next.<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately Barlow did leave a poem that is worthy

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<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps worth remarking, in confirmation of the advance in taste made in twenty years, that a review of the *Columbiad* published in *The Portfolio* for January, 1809, points out its faults as neatly and as surely as any modern critic could do it. The anonymous reviewer was especially annoyed by the ridiculous alliteration in a verse referring to Tell :

*Picks off the pippin from the smiling boy.*

of mild praise. This is not his *Conspiracy of Kings* (1792), which is sheer rant, but his mock-heroic *The Hasty Pudding* (1796), which owed its origin to the fact that one day at Chambéry he was regaled with this favourite dish, which he had vainly asked for on his travels. The golden age of the mock-heroic was nearly over when Barlow wrote his three short cantos, but it can fairly be claimed that some of his predecessors in the *genre* were not his superiors. Perhaps the poem would be better if it were shorter; perhaps the fact that it is shorter than *The Columbiad* has unduly influenced readers in its favour; but at least, like a reed, it has bent before the blasts of time—and survived. Such has not been the fate of the verses of the once notorious negro prodigy Phillis Wheatley or of the effusions of numerous other minor bards whose names mean little even to students. Each in turn suggests the question whether the force of imitativeness can farther go.

Turning to the miscellaneous prose writers of our period, we discover, as might have been inferred, a number of books dealing with the natural features of a country the inhabitants of which were becoming more self-conscious. One of these is interesting enough to deserve mention. In 1766 a certain Jonathan Carver, bent on discovering the Northwest Passage, and on showing King George how extensive were the dominions just wrested from the French, left Boston on a westward journey, which culminated in his exploration of Lake Superior. When he visited England to get his reward, he was graciously allowed to publish his *Travels through the Interior Parts of North America* (1778), a work which brought him more fame than money. Of his sad but



scarcely innocent career, cut off as he was by war from his native land, there is no need to speak; but his quaint, readable book deserves praise and has the honour of having inspired Schiller to write his *Nadowessiers Todtenlied*.

The interest of latter-day readers in the historians of the period will probably be little greater than their interest in the explorers. Yet again, as might have been anticipated, the self-consciousness of the epoch manifested itself in an important group of books, two of which deserve to be singled out for special notice. The first is *The History of Massachusetts*, by Governor Thomas Hutchinson (1711–80), whose interesting and pathetic career as colonial statesman and loyalist exile is familiar to Americans. By his scholarly tastes, his judicial temper, and his access to important documents, Hutchinson was so well qualified for his task that he is generally regarded as the ablest historian produced in America before the nineteenth century. The first volume of his work appeared in 1764; the manuscript of the second volume was nearly lost in the sack of his house by a mob, in August, 1765, but it was in large part recovered and the instalment was issued in 1767; the third volume, which carried the story from 1750 to 1774, the year he went to England, was finished in 1778 but not published until fifty years later. Prejudices having waned, it has long since been recognised that Hutchinson was a truly good man, possessed of a clear and accurate mind, industrious, and learned. Even in dealing with his own unfortunate administration he was notably moderate in tone. But that he was the great historian some writers have asserted him to be is very doubtful. Many a mere annalist has

more literary charm, and of the historical imagination that makes a past age live again he is surely destitute.

The author of the second book we must mention had too much imagination of a kind. This was the Rev. Samuel Peters (1735-1826), an Episcopalian clergyman of Connecticut, who, after living as something of a *grand seigneur*, and thereby offending the Whig patriots grievously, published anonymously in London, in 1781, a *General History* of his native commonwealth, by which he offended them still more. Whether this production, which originated the famous "Blue Laws," was intended as a satire, or whether its author seriously composed falsehoods which he trusted would be accepted by strangers, to the disgrace of the little State, or whether, finally, his mind was disordered and the dupe of its own fancies, is hard to determine. Probably the last is the only theory that will fit the case. By adopting it we can afford to smile at pages that long gave offence to many worthy persons. We can regard Peters as an unbalanced combination of an Ishmael, with his hand raised against every comer, and an American humourist careless of how much he exaggerates provided he makes his point. The points this eccentric clergyman makes with regard to the famous custom of "bundling" hold a high place among the curiosities of literature.

Another class of prose writings increased during our period to an extent not surprising when we remember that the cause of the Revolution was to patriotic souls the cause of human freedom. Reference is made of course to the tracts and books relating to slavery and the slave-trade. In this connection two authors emerge into prominence.

The first is Anthony Benezet (1713-84), born at St. Quentin, the son of aristocratic Huguenots, who, fleeing from their native France, joined the Society of Friends in London and afterward emigrated to Philadelphia. In the latter place Anthony became a teacher and philanthropist, devoting himself to emancipation propaganda and distributing gratuitously his numerous tracts. His fame has been overshadowed by that of the second writer, John Woolman, but he was a good and interesting man who wrote from the depths of his heart.

JOHN WOOLMAN (1720-72) has been fortunate in finding eulogists in Charles Lamb and Whittier, but his *Journal* (1775) would have won him fit friends, though few, even if it had never secured illustrious admirers. He was born near Burlington, New Jersey, worked on a farm, and then at the age of twenty-one became a store-keeper's clerk. A typical American youth would have proceeded to acquire wealth and social position; Woolman, having many American qualities but not the normal American aim in life, devoted himself to spiritual acquisitions, and was as successful in his way as any of his more worldly-minded neighbours. He soon opened a school for poor children, then began to "speak in meeting," after that to travel through the colonies visiting the various Quaker societies. In order to earn his living without interfering too much with his itinerant missions, he became a tailor, probably the only one who has recorded himself as opposed to the use of dyed garments since such use is not founded in pure wisdom. Soon after a visit to the Carolinas, in 1746, his mind began more and more to occupy itself with the institution of slavery, and he not only re-

frained from drawing up the wills of such Quakers as desired to bequeath slaves to their heirs, but bore open and positive witness against the evil, especially in the two parts of his tract *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* (1753-62). Further details of his philanthropic life are needless. He continued to journey whithersoever the spirit moved him, and finally, in 1772, sailed to England to labour among the brethren there, going as a steerage passenger in order to avoid paying for the sumptuous furnishing of the ship! While attending a quarterly meeting at York he was taken down with smallpox—that scourge of eighteenth-century American visitors to England, especially of the candidates for ordination in the Established Church. He died leaving behind him a reputation for simple-hearted and single-minded piety and benevolence that can hardly be equalled and cannot be excelled in the annals of our race.

When it is said that Woolman's writings reveal his life and character with rare fidelity, it would seem that higher praise could not be given and that they should rank as classics. But they do not, and Charles Lamb's exhortation, "Get the writings of John Woolman by heart," and Whittier's poetical declaration that the reader of Woolman becomes sensible "of a sweetness as of violets" will never secure either popularity or high rank for their favourite. He would have been the last man to wish for either, and his *Journal* is all the more endeared to its lovers because it is not one of the books that everybody reads. Yet it is a pity that so unaffected a record of such a sincere, sweetly noble life should not be familiar to us all from childhood to old age. Why is it not? Such a lovely and



sympathetic heart, such a record of unselfish devotion to humanity, such a naïve revelation of quaintness and homeliness of character, such unaffected English written by a man "with his eye on his object"—why do we not know John Woolman better than we do Benjamin Franklin? Can it be that as frail mortals we are prone to prefer this-worldliness to other-worldliness? Let us hope not. Let us admit frankly that there are limits to the charm—at least, the literary charm—of characters and writers of almost limitless unsophistication. Woolman suffers from the defects of his qualities. He lacks the charm of mobility. He has little or no eye for the beauties of nature, and no background of culture. We perceive his nobility, but we cannot shut our eyes to his morbidity. He would not drink out of silver vessels, and, alas! the great world will not drink out of his earthen one. So it is that John Woolman's *Journal* has not the fascination of the self-revelations of Jonathan Edwards when that great man was at his best. Compare the following passage relative to his marriage with the beautiful rhapsody already quoted from Edwards, it being always remembered, however, that no passage whether used for praise or for blame can adequately represent a book, especially such a book as Woolman's *Journal*:

About this time, believing it good for me to settle, and thinking seriously about a companion, my heart was turned to the Lord, with desires that he would give me wisdom to proceed therein agreeably to his will; and he was pleased to give me a well-inclined damsel, Sarah Ellis, to whom I was married the 18th day of the eighth month, in the year 1749.

The eye for nature, the background of culture, that Woolman conspicuously lacked, are found in comparatively

full measure in J. HECTOR ST. JOHN DE CREVECŒUR, whose *Letters of an American Farmer* may be said to furnish a greater number of delightful pages than any other book written in America during the eighteenth century, save only Franklin's *Autobiography*. Crevecœur was born in Normandy, of a noble family, in 1731; he was partly educated in England, removed thence to America in 1754; married, and tilled a farm; and perhaps joined the Friends in Pennsylvania. He suffered imprisonment during the Revolution, having been mistaken for a spy. Then he visited Europe, and on his return found that Indians had ravaged his farm. His children had, however, been rescued by a kindly merchant, and Crevecœur could settle down to his new duties as French consul in New York. He remained in America about ten years, and then returned to France. The rest of his life until his death, in 1813, was marked by little save the publication of three interesting volumes in French entitled *Voyage dans la Haute Pennsylvanie et dans l'État de New York* (1801), which he pretended to have translated, but surely composed.

Crevecœur's masterpiece—by far the best of the volumes fathered on the unliterary American farmer of the period—was published in London, in 1782; a French translation by the author appeared in 1784; this was followed three years later by a greatly enlarged edition. German and Dutch translations attested the popularity of the work, which was also highly praised by judicious critics, but has of late suffered surprising neglect. Perhaps it had something to do with the inception of the Pantisocracy scheme of Southey and Coleridge; perhaps it affected the genius of Chateaubriand; at least it is

claimed that it inspired many unfortunate Europeans to seek idyllic homes in a wilderness that furnished them with graves instead.

It is not difficult to account for the fascination of these letters written, seemingly, to an imaginary friend in England by a man who, although a farmer, was not the uncultured representative of that class whose character he assumed. With the exception of the letter describing the distresses of a frontiersman exposed to the ravages of the War of the Revolution, to the assaults of the Indians, and to the almost worse conflict of emotions caused by his loyalty to England and his pride and love for rising America, Crèvecoeur's pages were either one long idyl or else a mingled idyl and pæan. This is not absolutely accurate, however, for in the letter describing Charleston, South Carolina, there is a denunciation of slavery that is not idyllic, and an account of a punishment inflicted on a slave that is almost if not quite too revolting to be believed. But with these exceptions *The Letters of an American Farmer* are an idyl, and a delightful though not a great one. It is true that when Crèvecoeur attempted to answer his own question, "What is an American?" he described a denizen of Utopia, a child of the golden age, not the good-natured, rather slouchy provincial of 1781; but the main point, which is easily missed, is that Crèvecoeur's imagination, fired by the vastness and the still virgin beauty of the country, and by the unshackled life of its inhabitants, bodied forth an ideal American which the real American has ever since taken more or less to heart. The farmers of Iowa do not read Crèvecoeur, but if they were to do so they would probably understand him

better than would some cultured inhabitants of the Atlantic coast. Crèvecoeur did not have his eye on the object at hand, but he did have it, idyllic idealist as he was, on the object at a distance, hence part of the fascination that still hangs over his descriptions of his own Pennsylvania and of primitive Nantucket.

But these letters have another charm than that of social and political idealism or that of style, marked as the latter is. They have the charm that attaches to writings that represent a loving and intimate association with nature. The nineteenth century in the production of such writings far surpassed its predecessor, but there are nature touches in Crèvecoeur that are worthy of the later White of Selborne, and of the still later Englishmen and Americans who have followed in the latter's wake. Perhaps one might almost say that Crèvecoeur, the optimist, suggests even more that other Frenchman, Senancour, the pessimist. Nature nursed them both, but the one child strode sturdily in front of her, while the other walked pensively by her side.



## PART III

### THE FORMATIVE PERIOD (1789-1829)

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#### CHAPTER IX

##### TRANSITIONAL WRITERS (1789-1809)

ALTHOUGH the year 1789, which saw Washington inaugurated President under the new Constitution, is of immense importance to the student of American political history, it is possible to point to other dates of greater importance to the student of American culture. The people who threw off their allegiance to Great Britain and, after a short period of anarchy, began their republican experiment, did not change essentially in character despite the stirring nature of the events in which they were participators. A considerable amount of radical partisan fervour was, indeed, generated among them, especially in connection with the French Revolution, and their optimism and self-reliance were doubtless stimulated. But even when, at the beginning of the new century, Jefferson became President, and inaugurated what historians are warranted in terming a "revolution" in favour of democratic government, the American people in the mass were still much the same primitive, slow, conservative nation of farmers that they had been before, embattled at Concord, they had fired the shot heard round the world.

They still depended upon England to tell them how to dress and what to read; they were still colonial in their conceit, ignorance, and thin-skinned sensitiveness. New Englanders showed enterprise in manning and sending out small fishing vessels, and throughout the country a sturdy population was steadily pushing westward; but in 1800 not four per cent of the 5,300,000 inhabitants lived in towns, and such townspeople as were to be found satisfied themselves with a few struggling theatres, some small un-influential newspapers, poor inns and stages, in short, with a mode of dull provincial life not widely different from that led by the preponderating farmer class. There was, it is true, a fair amount of solid comfort in the more settled regions; there was little caste pressure felt by white men anywhere; American citizens were mainly optimists, from the prosperous Boston merchant to the shiftless Kentucky pioneer; but the restless, shrewd, enterprising, successful American, of whom the rest of the world has for more than two generations had a clear and not wholly agreeable impression, had hardly come into being at the opening of the nineteenth century. Both Franklin and Jefferson were shrewd, enterprising, and successful, but the urbanity of the eighteenth century prevented them from being restless in the crude fashion of the generations that succeeded them.

Yet both these men did much to bring into being the pushing, aggressive American who, by the time of the presidency of Andrew Jackson at the close of our present period, was to be found everywhere throughout the thinly settled country, even in the slave-holding South. Jefferson especially, through his purchase of Louisiana, un-

locked the imaginations of his countrymen by giving them an imperial domain in which to expand. The inventions of Eli Whitney and Robert Fulton and the severing of commercial ties with Europe, in consequence of the Embargo and the War of 1812, brought about a great development of manufactures and incited people to grow rich swiftly whom Franklin had counselled to grow rich thriftily. Speculation and reckless extravagance ensued, and as the years went by the burden and disgrace of slavery pressed heavily upon the young republic. But the bounty of nature was for the time at least practically inexhaustible, and the energy and buoyant optimism of the population, particularly after foreign immigration began in earnest, could not be appreciably checked.

Naturally the evolution just sketched was in the main political, industrial, and social; but literature, the fine arts, and pure science had their share in it, and the development of each is worthy of study. In the world of letters we begin with a jejune imitativeness as marked as in the strictly Colonial Period. We discover, nevertheless, at least one imaginative writer of much power, and we find worthy contributors to that "literature of knowledge" which is of special importance to a young, crude people. We pass to a period still imitative but proving its vitality and power by modifying literary types and producing writers still read after the lapse of more than two generations. This leads us to a literature mainly proceeding from one section, New England, and marked by an originality and an earnest power sufficient to produce great good at home and to secure a fair respect abroad. In other words, beginning with a period pre-eminent for its

political and almost contemptible for its literary achievements, we end with one of which almost precisely the reverse may be predicated. The period of sectional strife over slavery is the golden age of American letters.

In his *Chronological Outlines of American Literature*, Prof. S. L. Whitcomb, who cannot well be accused of lack of patriotism, manages to find but ten entries to chronicle for the year 1789. Of these entries only one can be said to belong to literature in any strict sense of the term—to wit, the portion of Franklin's *Autobiography* dealing with the last two years covered by that delightful book. By a stretch of charity two plays might be set apart from the other entries, but the remainder will suffice to show the straits to which the literary annalist is reduced. They are John Adams's *Discourses on Davila*, an address and a newspaper article by Franklin, Washington's first inaugural speech, a slight history of the American Revolution, a volume of medical essays, and Noah Webster's *Dissertations on the English Language*. Yet at this time Americans had already shown considerable promise in another art. Benjamin West had won fame by his historical paintings, and John Singleton Copley and Gilbert Stuart by their portraits. In a few years Edward Malbone was to raise the art of miniature painting to a very great height. Nor could any save a prejudiced observer deny that the American mind had already shown itself capable of high intellectual achievements. The services to science of Franklin, of Benjamin Thompson (Count Rumford), of Rittenhouse, of John and William Bartram, to name no others, were sufficient evidence in one direction, and the state papers and political essays of the leading public men



in another. Why was it, then, that in the domain of pure literature little was to be observed save sheer imitativeness and amateurishness? It is idle to urge that Americans were too busy bending their energies in other directions, for there is clear proof that nothing was nearer to the hearts of many of their ablest men than such a conspicuous success in letters as would remove from their passionately loved country the reproach of literary sterility. It is more pertinent to urge that the intensity of their self-consciousness did much to defeat their high aims, and that it was more difficult to shake off colonial dependence in literature than in any other department of mental activity because British books held possession of the field and, in consequence of trade conditions and of bad copyright laws, would long continue to hold it.

During the twenty years covered by this chapter such literary primacy as could be ascertained of any town in that day of small things continued as during the Revolutionary Period to belong to Philadelphia. After 1810, however, New York became the most important town in literary productiveness as well as in population and commercial enterprise. Boston also awoke from its comparative intellectual sloth, which it had shared with Harvard College, if we may trust the lugubrious accounts of that ancient institution given by some of its literary alumni. Indeed, as we have seen, New England's efforts at "polite composition" undoubtedly centred for our period at Hartford or at Yale College in New Haven. But if on the whole it be admitted that the city of Franklin continued for a few years after his death to maintain its intellectual prestige, it must also be admitted that in the higher forms

of literature the advance marked by the works of Godfrey and Evans had not been maintained. Philadelphia was more important as the home of Dr. Richard Rush (1745–1813), the voluminous writer on medical and sociological topics, and of Mathew Carey (1760–1839), the still more voluminous publicist, than as the home of any devotee of literature save the novelist Charles Brockden Brown. Yet although writers like Rush and Carey have little or no place in a history of literature constructed on normal lines, they meant more to American culture in the early years of the republic than a score of poets would have done.

Carey, an Irish emigrant, who began life as a printer, publisher, and editor, especially of the popular magazine entitled *The American Museum*, and ended it as an indefatigable advocate of protection, instructed his adopted countrymen on every conceivable subject from the alleged plagiarisms of Sterne to infant schools, and from the yellow-fever epidemic of 1793 to the inconsistencies of *Hamlet*. His fellow-townsmen Dr. Rush, besides subscribing the Declaration of Independence and proving himself a practical philanthropist, affixed his name to essays dealing not merely with medicine but with education, penology, and other departments of sociology. In many of his ideas he was far ahead of his generation, and although neither he nor Carey can be said to have escaped the baneful effects of that versatility which has so long characterized the American mind, they were both conspicuously useful citizens who wielded tireless pens for the greatest good of the greatest number. They were thus far from deserving the scurrilous abuse of the eccentric William Cobbett, whose *Peter Porcupine* pam-

phlets form a portion of American literature which we cheerfully yield to our British cousins. Of their many works, however, but one can be noticed—Carey's *Vindiciae Hibernicae* (1819); a refutation of the charges of butchery brought against his Irish ancestors of 1641. This book, on the successive editions of which he bestowed tremendous labour, did little good to its cause on account of its total lack of literary charm and power, but it illustrates admirably the philanthropy of its author. He distributed it freely at great personal loss, and in 1837 was able to declare that he had never written a line for money. The citizen literature to which he contributed counts for little in the annals of art, but for much in those of character.

While Rush and Carey were preserving the utilitarian, philanthropic tradition of Franklin, a certain well-to-do Peter Markoe laboured zealously to preserve the literary tradition of Godfrey. He, too, wrote odes and a poetical tragedy, *The Patriot Chief*, together with other performances which it would be proper to leave reposing in Limbo were it not for the fact that they illustrate so well the imitateness, the jejuneness, the straining after effect that characterize the verse of these far from stagnant years. There is not a trace in Markoe of the freshness of spirit to be found in Evans and Godfrey, nor is much if any more of this freshness to be discovered in the magazine verse of the period. Some may be found, however, in the poems of William Clifton (1772-99), who perhaps best represents for the close of the century the poetry of the Philadelphia group. Clifton threw aside Quaker sobriety and became something of a dilettante, winning fair success as a graceful lyrist and as a vigorous political satirist. His

lyrics are of course imitative, reminding one now of the easy grace of Gay, now of the pure charm of Collins, but even imitation may be pardoned when it results in such stanzas as those Clifton addressed "To Fancy," one of which must suffice to indicate the quality of the poem :

When unclouded shines the day,  
When my spirits dance and play,  
To some sunny bank we'll go  
Where the fairest roses blow,  
And in gamesome mood prepare  
Chaplets for thy spangled hair.

His most elaborate effort, "The Group," an attack upon democracy, written about the time of the agitation over Jay's Treaty, deserves mention mainly because it shows that however pure the morals of the primitive Americans might be, their writers, far from being prudish, were often distinctly coarse. Even after the new century was begun, one can find the editor of an exemplary literary periodical printing an obscene joke or a long account of a scandalous English divorce case not many pages away from poems selected, with warm commendation, from the *Lyrical Ballads*.

But even obscenity is often far less harmful in its results than partisan scurrility, and Clifton was only one of many writers who used their talents in Thersites-like support of one of the two rival parties: the conservative Federalists, headed by Hamilton, and the rather radical Democratic-Republicans, headed by Jefferson. Of these satirists and vituperators we need recall only Thomas Green Fessenden (1771-1837), a native of New Hampshire, who after some journalistic work began the new



century as one of the first promoters in England of American mechanical inventions. He was more visionary than shrewd, lost his money, and in an effort to get upon his feet wrote a Hudibrastic poem entitled *Terrible Tractoration* (1803), which satirized the physicians who opposed the use of Perkins's metallic tractors. This dull book had a considerable success in England, and Hawthorne years after thought Fessenden worthy of an essay. His miscellaneous verses and other publications after his return to America have here and there a touch of life, but he would scarcely be worth even the present summary treatment but for the fact that his *Democracy Unveiled; or, Tyranny Stripped of the Garb of Patriotism*, by Christopher Causitic, LL.D., published at Boston, in 1805, illustrates excellently the partisanship of the times. It would be difficult to gain from any other writer a better idea of the prevailing lack of dignity, not to say decency, that characterized authors of the period, or of the vindictiveness with which Jefferson was hounded by persons who had been rudely jostled by the French Revolution. Democratic excesses did need correction, but hardly by a rhymester who was not above charging the President of the United States with systematically attempting to seduce a friend's wife.

The day of coarseness is nearly over, however, for women begin to contest literary honours with the men. Some half a dozen literary ladies, who occasionally remind us of Miss Seward and other British contemporaries, might be mentioned, but only two are now remembered, and of them only one is at all read. This is Mrs. Susanna Rowson (1762-1824), an Englishwoman who, after a varied

career as an actress and author, opened a successful girls' school in Boston, and continued to write for the edification of the public. Her poems, plays, novels, and other performances are now forgotten with the exception of her story *Charlotte Temple* (1790) and its sequel *Lucy Temple* (1828). The former "tale of truth" recounted in most stilted phraseology, but with eminently exemplary motives, a case of seduction in which a relative of the author's had played the part of the deceiver. Sentimental didacticism has rarely been carried farther than in this book, which may still be obtained in cheap editions,<sup>1</sup> but in "elegance" of style and solemnity of purpose as well as in oppressiveness of learning Mrs. Rowson and the other members of her group must yield to Mrs. Mercy Warren of Massachusetts (1728-1814). This learned lady was a sister of the famous orator James Otis and the intimate friend of a much more sprightly woman, whose letters are among the best America has produced, Abigail Adams, wife of one President and mother of another. Mrs. Warren wrote two plays which made use of thinly disguised Revolutionary characters, but based her chief claim to renown on two tragedies published in her *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* (1790), a volume which has shared the fate of the equally solemn and

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<sup>1</sup> *Charlotte Temple* is not nearly so interesting, from many points of view, as a now less-read novel (in letters) entitled *The Coquette; or, The History of Eliza Wharton, a Novel Founded on Fact. By a Lady of Massachusetts* (1797). This American imitator of Richardson was Mrs. Hannah Webster Foster (1759-1840), a clergyman's wife, who utilized for moral purposes a current scandal, for the details of which the curious may consult Mrs. C. H. Dall's *Romance of the Association* (1875). For other primitive fiction, see the Bibliography.

elaborate efforts of Dwight and Barlow to vindicate the poetical genius of America. Mrs. Warren's later *History of the American Revolution*, in three volumes, is in style as ponderous as her tragedies, but through her wide acquaintance with the leaders of the movement, it still retains some value. Ponderosity such as hers is, however, better than such fatuity as is displayed in the poems of Mrs. Sarah Wentworth Morton, also a native of Massachusetts, who has the honour of having written what is perhaps the first American novel and of representing for her native land the quintessential principles of Della Cruscan sentimentality. As "Philenia" she exchanged metrical compliments with the most important contemporary poet of the other sex, and was by him heralded to oblivion as "the American Sappho," a tribute which she returned with the following interest:

Blest poet, whose Æolian lyre  
 Can wind the varied notes along,  
 While the melodious Nine inspire  
 The graceful eloquence of song.  
 Who now with Homer's strength can rise,  
 Then with the polished Ovid move;  
 Now swift as rapid Pindar flies,  
 Then soft as Sappho's breath of love.

So sang "Philenia," and "Menander" replied:

And every muse has carved Philenia's name  
 On every laurel in the groves of fame.

But who, the reader may ask, was "Menander"? Such a question would not have been asked in Boston in 1812, when *The Works in Verse and Prose of the late Robert Treat Paine, Jun., Esq.*, with notes and a long bio-

graphical introduction, came from the press in an octavo volume of over five hundred pages. In the early nineties Paine (1773-1811), as a Harvard student, had won praise for "college exercises" in which it is now difficult to discover anything more meritorious than juvenile cleverness. He had then obtained some reputation through a prize prologue written for the opening of the first theatre in Boston, and through occasional poems like "The Invention of Letters," an effusion dedicated to Washington, who filled with some effort the rôle of a Cincinnatus-Mæcenas. This reputation passed into celebrity when, in 1798, in the midst of the flurry with France, Paine published his ringing martial ode entitled "Adams and Liberty." Odes and songs for the anniversaries of local fire societies, orations, theatrical criticisms, and other such compositions were then constantly demanded of the bard, and the solemn interest they inspired may be gauged from the elaborate annotations of his editor. Yet apart from his fair metrical facility and the pathetic popular craving for a poet, no reason can now be discovered for the vogue Paine obtained in provincial Boston, except the almost universal tendency to connect genius and a wayward life.

Wayward Paine certainly was. He was born at Taunton, Massachusetts, the son of a subsequent signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was christened Thomas, but in 1801, through an act of the legislature, assumed his father's name in order to avoid confusion with that other Thomas Paine whose reputation, at least among the orthodox, was not savoury. After graduation he entered a counting-house, but soon became something of a journalist and a supporter of the struggling



drama. He made not a little money from his occasional poems—sometimes averaging over five dollars a line—a fact which helps to prove how inordinately anxious Americans were to have a national literature. His habits were bad, however, and on his marrying an actress he was disowned by his father. He then studied and practised law, and, strange to say, found many clients among a people who are proverbially hardheaded and shrewd. But he preferred to cleave to actors and boon companions, and for some years before his death, in Boston, on November 13, 1811, lived with his family in a destitution which, if it never equalled that of Boyse and other British poetical ne'er-do-wells of whom Paine is somewhat a counterpart, was notwithstanding unusual in America and distressing. In this respect at least his career preluded that of Poe, and he was probably on the whole a better scholar, speaker, conversationalist, and wit than the unfortunate genius whose name is now honoured in every land. But his talents lay on the surface and were not charming enough in their kind to attract posterity, which even fails to take great interest in the rather unique Bohemianism that perhaps dazed his contemporaries.

Paine's interest in the drama naturally leads to a few words about its rise in America, for it would be idle to say anything about the rival Della Cruscans who in various other towns vainly strove for equal bays. Anti-quaries have discovered one or two dramatic compositions prior to Godfrey's *Prince of Parthia*, and we have mentioned a few that followed it, all of them being ineffective both as literature and as acting plays. That the drama should have developed late is not surprising, since it had

seen its best days in England before the colonies were really settled, and since the Puritans of New England had not the desire, nor the Cavaliers of the South the accessories proper for its cultivation. It was not until 1752 that regular actors were available. On September 5 of that year an English troupe presented, in an improvised structure at Williamsburg, both Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and Garrick's *Lethe*—the last being an auspicious and inauspicious combination of names. Oblivion has been the fate of most American plays; yet several American actors have trod worthily in the footsteps of the greatest of players. Not long afterward permanent theatres were constructed, the first in Annapolis, the second in New York. Baltimore and Philadelphia followed, and in spite of fulminations from the Continental Congress the future of the stage was soon secure, even Boston, where adverse laws were allowed to lapse, gaining a permanent theatre in 1794. Seven years before, the first American play performed in public by a company of professional actors had won applause at the John Street Theatre, in New York (April 16, 1787). This was *The Contrast*, a comedy which derived its name from the fact that its motive was the contrast between homely Americanism and frivolous foreign society as represented in the reigning fashions and in the manners of affected travellers just returned from abroad. Its author was Royal Tyler (1757–1826), afterward a jurist of good standing in Vermont. He also wrote other plays, a picaresque story that will demand attention later, occasional poems, among them a spirited protest against Della Cruscan absurdities, and literary criticism which was doubtless of benefit to the readers of the *Port-*

*folio* in which it appeared. In short, he was a versatile American who deserves to be respected, though hardly to have his works republished.

*The Contrast* was printed in 1790, its list of subscribers proving that interest in the drama was confined mainly to the States stretching from New York to Virginia, inclusive. The reader of to-day, although not specially interested or charmed, finds no reason to be surprised that the play succeeded. Obviously amateurish, it was nevertheless the work of a man who had read intelligently a number of English comedies and novels. Besides it could count upon patriotic fervour for support, as the opening lines of the prologue anticipated:

Exult, each patriot heart ! this night is shown  
A piece, which we may fairly call our own ;  
Where the proud titles of " My Lord ! Your Grace !"  
To humble Mr. and plain Sir give place.

It is just to add that much of the stilted conversation, the pairing of valets and masters, the situation of the affected Dimple, who changes from one young woman to another for mercenary purposes in which he is finally disappointed, much more Jonathan's description of his first night at a New York theatre, can scarcely be said to reek with Americanism. But Jonathan, the Yankee servant of the solemnly virtuous hero, Colonel Manly, although only a variation of type, is a genuinely humorous creation. Perhaps he may with justice be considered the first original Yankee in literature, and he seems to be the first to use at length and effectively the New England dialect. He gives distinct comic movement to several scenes, and, as briskness and point are not entirely lacking elsewhere,

while the sturdy wholesomeness of the moral makes up for the extravagance of the caricaturing, it seems permissible to conclude that in *The Contrast* the American drama made a not unpromising start.

That it has not shown the progress that has been hoped is due to no fault of Royal Tyler, or of the more important William Dunlap (1766-1839), whose comedy *The Father, or American Shandyism* was produced in 1789. Dunlap, born at Perth Amboy, New Jersey, was one of the most influential and versatile of early Americans. After the Revolution he studied painting under Benjamin West, in London, where he became devoted to the theatre. On his return he was inspired by the success of *The Contrast*, and after an abortive effort made a good beginning with the comedy named above, which, though not so original as Tyler's, showed perhaps a little more knowledge of dramatic art. It contained references to Washington and the new Constitution, dealt with the frustrated seduction of an American woman by a British officer, introduced a Yankee Corporal Trim and a stilted Colonel Duncan who imitated Uncle Toby by an absurd charity towards mosquitoes, and ended with a clever mixing up and disentanglement. The public was easily pleased, and Dunlap continued to write, producing during his long life upward of sixty plays, many of which have never been printed. Perhaps he may not unfairly be described as an American adapter of Kotzebue, and the tragedy *André* (1798) may be regarded as his most important play. Unfortunately for himself, though not for the public, he became a theatrical manager as well as writer, and shortly after the period covered by this chapter suffered great losses. Then he



went back to painting, and not unsuccessfully, showing also his unquenchable public spirit by his organization of the National Academy of Design. But he is best known to-day for important prose works, lives of the actor George Frederick Cooke (1813) and of the novelist Charles Brockden Brown (1815), and in particular a *History of the American Theatre* (1832). Quaint and unsystematic though these productions may be, especially the life of Brown, they are nevertheless valuable to students and more interesting through their very naïveté than modern methodical treatises are wont to be. A large, wholesome, patriotic personality is behind them, and although they have no claims to be regarded as classics, they deserve some reading and much gratitude.

The drama was not the only form of literature that took its rise during our present period. Thus far, although Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and their compeers had long been dead, we have had practically no works of fiction to chronicle for America, except the small beginnings made by the literary ladies. The puritanic prejudice against such light literature had, however, waned sufficiently before the last decade of the eighteenth century to permit the production of a few novels worth mentioning, the short story being reserved for later development and on the whole better fortune.

It was natural enough that didacticism or civic utility should characterize these early attempts at fiction. We have seen how Mrs. Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* was designed as a warning to inexperienced girls; the next important novel, if it deserves that name, was intended to guard inexperienced citizens against the seductions of de-

mocracy. This was a rambling, satirical extravaganza entitled *Modern Chivalry; or, The Adventures of Captain Farrago and Teague O'Regan, his Servant*. It was by Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748-1816), who has already been mentioned in connection with his collegemate Freneau, and appeared in two divisions with an interval of ten years between them (1796-1806). The extravagant claims of democracy were held up to ridicule by such simple devices as the elevation to high office of the ignorant Irish bogtrotter Teague, and a discussion of the propriety of allowing beasts to vote. The author indulged himself in numerous digressions, not least interesting when most absurd, and showed his ability and considerable reading, especially of Sterne. It is perhaps worth noting that he at first intended to write a Hudibrastic poem, and that his change to prose may indicate a certain amount of literary prescience. The book had some vogue, but, while clever, would scarcely give modern readers a fair idea of Brackenridge's real powers. In some ways he was a remarkable man. While teaching in Maryland he wrote for his pupils a drama entitled *Bunker Hill* (1776), which had at least the rare merit of treating the British commanders as human beings. A second play was less liberal in its tone. Later Brackenridge was editor of a magazine and a Revolutionary chaplain. Then he studied law, and in 1781 transferred his Scotch-Irish energies to the frontier town of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, where he built up a large practice that finally placed him on the Supreme bench of the State. During his long life he never wearied of writing speeches, articles, and poems in support of whatever public interest seemed to demand

his aid. Unlike most of the aspiring authors of his time, he scarcely thought, when he published his *Miscellanies*, in 1806, that he would be read over twenty years later. His modesty was well founded, for the world is too busy even to remember him in his curious capacity as one of the very latest of the masque writers. It would, however, doubtless have interested Milton could he have known that *Comus* would inspire *A Masque written at the Warm Springs, Virginia, in the Year 1784*, in which the Potomac River would be made to pay a just tribute to the virtues of General Washington.

That other literary jurist, Royal Tyler, in his two-volume story entitled *The Algerine Captive* (1797), had the wholesome purpose of furnishing his countrymen with fiction that should deal with American rather than with foreign life. Unfortunately Balzac was not yet born, and the aspiring Yankee had to content himself with Smollett for a master. The result was a picaresque tale which at first is broadly humorous in its satiric description of education at Harvard and of life in various towns and villages throughout the country, especially in its attacks upon the far from learned medical profession. When, however, the hero, Dr. Updike Underhill, who becomes a ship's surgeon, is finally captured by the Algerines, he feels it incumbent to give his readers so many details about the customs of his captors that one forgets completely that one is reading fiction. In other words, our clever American author is not even artist enough to master a simple form of narrative. He perhaps deserves remembrance, however, for his courageous attempt, and also for the power with which he described the horrors of a slave-ship's voyage at a

time when witnesses against the inhumanity of the traffic were sorely needed.

But the year of Tyler's story was also marked by the advent of a new author who was destined to be the first professional man of letters and important creative writer of the English-speaking portion of the new world. In 1797 CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN (1771-1810) wrote his *Alcuin*, a rather daring discussion of the hardships wrought, especially to women, by indissoluble marriages. There was more fact than fiction in this performance, and indeed the writer's mind never lost the impress made upon it by an early and assiduous application to the law. Prior to his legal studies Brown, who was born at Philadelphia of good Quaker stock, displayed much of the precocious acquisitiveness of knowledge that had characterized Trumbull and Dwight. At the school of Robert Proud, the historian of Pennsylvania, his health had been undermined by his labours and he never really recovered it. Then came the inevitable verse-writing, followed by the legal reading. Literature was more attractive, however, and, although it had no standing as a calling for energetic or for sluggish Americans, it was deliberately adopted despite the protests of his family.

Shortly before he began to write *Alcuin* Brown took up his residence in New York, where he formed a friendship with his future biographer, William Dunlap, and lived on terms of intimacy with Dr. Elihu H. Smith, a young physician who wrote an opera and edited the first anthology of American verse. These friends stimulated his literary powers, although Smith soon fell a victim to yellow fever. After some essays and one or two abortive



novels a successful beginning was made in 1798 with *Wieland; or, The Transformation*. By 1802 Brown, who worked with little system and kept several stories going at once, had published five other romances—*Ormond; or, The Secret Witness* (1799), *Arthur Mervyn* (1800-01), *Edgar Huntley*, *Clara Howard*, and *Jane Talbot* (1801). In addition to this remarkable output, he gave the world a new magazine, and shortly afterward returned to Philadelphia and started another, which managed to exist five years. He seemed to have emptied himself of fiction, for the rest of his short life was given up to editing an *Annual Register*, to publishing solid and sensible political pamphlets, brief memorial sketches, and other miscellaneous productions, and to labouring on elaborate geographical and historical works that remained unfinished. There is little reason to believe that he would have left a deeper mark if the long-resisted consumption had not finally carried him off; but there is every reason to praise his energy and his disinterested labours for the enlightenment of his countrymen.

Of late years Brown has had few readers, although an attempt has been made to revive him. In his own day he attained some popularity; his novels were republished in England, where they won the plaudits of Shelley and Scott. They are usually held to have influenced both Hawthorne and Poe, although this is hard to prove. Probably it would be both rash and useless for any critic to attempt to induce the world to reverse its verdict, for the school of writers to which Brown belonged seems hopelessly dead, and his individual merits are neutralized by an almost total lack of charm\* and by positive

faults of choice and construction of material that are painful to readers accustomed to fair or good craftsmanship. Yet that he possessed remarkable talents, not to say genius, seems as certain as that he is completely antiquated. Putting to one side his industry, his learning, his zeal for letters, so noteworthy for his times, and considering him solely in his capacity of romancer, one is almost obliged to conclude that, although his indebtedness to Godwin is plain, he is nevertheless in some respects impressive to a degree that rarely characterizes the mere disciple. For example, the hero who gives his name to the romance *Ormond* is plainly modelled on the Falkland of *Caleb Williams*, as Dunlap himself acknowledged; but Brown was original and realistic enough to introduce into his story of a phenomenal man's efforts to seduce a superlative young woman a vivid description of Philadelphia ravaged by yellow fever, which in point of power owed little to any literary model. The characters of the book are absolutely unconvincing, but Brown wrote in an age of sentimentalism and romance. Godwin stood between him and Fielding.

Again, although Brown, while expressing his dislike of the wildly mysterious romances of Mrs. Radcliffe, made full use of many of her modes of exciting tense expectation and horror, it seems plain, as American critics have observed, that he had a more genuine sense of the weird and the truly terrible than any of his British teachers possessed, and that he could most effectively make his readers share his own emotions. The romance in which this weird intensity is seen at its height is *Wieland*, a tale of the dire effects wrought upon an exemplary Pennsylvanian family by a mysterious voice which turns out to be

that of an evil-minded ventriloquist. The way in which the mystery is solved is as unsatisfactory as the style and materials of the story are derivative, but ours is an age that loves mystery, whereas the eighteenth century preferred to explain everything by natural causes. Ventriloquism and spontaneous combustion were as mysterious agencies as Brown could well allow himself, and on the whole he hailed them impressively and is not greatly to blame for the inartistic and unpleasant effects they now produce. What makes *Wieland* memorable is at bottom its author's possession of a strong and peculiar imagination. It seems unlikely that any writer not thus endowed would have ventured to make provincial Philadelphia the scene of his romances or so fearlessly have introduced realistic elements into his work. Hawthorne himself gained greatly when he utilized the assistance of a romantic past, and Poe, when he was not haunting a no-man's land, made constant use of foreign scenes. Brown's contemporaries were using haunted castles and other such appliances. He was not above employing concealed chambers and the foreigners of unknown antecedents who were common in the America of his day; but in the main he was brave and original enough to give his romances a homely setting in which strong effects could be produced only by a vigorous imagination.<sup>1</sup> Yet he could, if he had chosen, have made use of a foreign setting, as his unfinished *Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist*, an intended sequel to *Wieland*, plainly proves.

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<sup>1</sup> *Edgar Huntley* deals with the adventures of a somnambulist, but is chiefly important for its use of wild scenery and of Indian atrocities, in which Brown is more or less a predecessor of Cooper.

The rest of Brown's fiction is easily dismissed. We need add little about *Ormond* save to remark that its realistic setting serves to throw into strong relief the romantic unreality of its plot and characters. Its topic, seduction, seemed to fascinate early American writers of all classes, and as in no other country were women less exposed to this danger, we may take it for granted that in dealing with it Brown and his contemporaries were drawing upon their reading rather than upon their observation. From books came also the incredibly selfish hero and the incredibly immaculate heroine, Constantia Dudley, so admired by Shelley. Brown's women, especially Jane Talbot and Clara Howard, are high-strung personages whose self-revelations would seem impossibly affected did we not have a number of contemporary letters, including some of Brown's own, to show us that at the close of the eighteenth century many American men and women lived in a world of high-flown sentimentality that contrasted strangely with their primitive provincial environment. Yet it is possible to take interest in his stilted heroines; for their creator's imagination fairly glowed with much of the intensity of the passions he was depicting.

*Arthur Mervyn* is Brown's most elaborate work, but it is not typical of his power of dealing with the passion of love and the emotion of fear, at least of fear dependent upon weird mystery. It is full of the mystery of perplexity, which is enhanced in an illegitimate way by the carelessly constructed plot, and following *Ormond* it also plays powerfully upon a reader's sensibility through its description of the ghastly effects wrought upon Philadelphia and its inhabitants by the yellow-fever epidemic of 1793.



It is difficult to pursue Mervyn's account of his own adventures—true to his British models, Brown, save in *Ormond*, adopts the autobiographical style directly or else indirectly through letters—or the involved adventures of the other characters; it is impossible to surrender one's self to the illusion that such adventures could have happened in Brown's prim birthplace; but it is easy under the influence of his strong imagination to walk the deserted streets of the plague-stricken city and to enter its forbidding houses tenanted by the dying and the dead. If this be true to-day, it seems hardly fair to sneer at the men and women who a century ago regarded Brown as a great and moving writer. His models were their standards, and they were right in perceiving that he measured well up to the Godwins and the Radcliffes. They had not yet progressed far enough to demand a sense of humour, an artistic ordering of materials, susceptibility to the charms of nature, and a subtle psychological analysis. They knew that their emotions had been deeply stirred, and that in some particulars at least the life around them had been faithfully set down; they inferred that only a born author could have produced six romances in four years in a country that could scarcely boast of many more in all its previous history; they hailed in Brown the first imaginative writer who had won the foreign fame so long desiderated. They were proud of him and rightly, and it is hypercritical for their descendants to patronize either him or them.

When Brown returned to Philadelphia in 1801 he did not find himself without a formidable rival in the fields of literature and journalism; indeed, he may be said to

have been partially eclipsed by the lustre emanating from the urbane Joseph Dennie (1768–1812). This gentleman, who was born in Boston, graduated from Harvard, left the law for literature, and about 1796 managed to make a success of a country newspaper, *The Farmer's Weekly Museum*, which Isaiah Thomas had founded at Walpole, New Hampshire. Here the young editor built up a tiny literary centre with the assistance of such aspirants as Fessenden and Royal Tyler, and won for himself a wide reputation by his collection of essays entitled *The Lay Preacher* (1796). That such small things should have loomed so large proved the low estate of literature, but it must be confessed that Dennie's style was good of its kind, and that he treated with some ease topics worthy of his countrymen's attention. He warned them against quacks, upbraided them for their sloth and intemperance, lamented the decadence of Harvard College, and upheld British conservatism against French radicalism. But business troubles followed, and Dennie, after trying to get to Congress, had to content himself with removing to Philadelphia as private secretary to Timothy Pickering, Secretary of State, an arch-Federalist and supporter of all things British. Soon, however, the journalist and moralist resumed his old vocation, and on January 3, 1801, under the pseudonym of "Oliver Oldschool, Esq.," made his bow as the editor of a large weekly sheet of eight pages entitled *The Portfolio*.

The prospectus issued by this American Addison, as his admirers delighted to style him, is a curious document, stilted in style, overweighted with elaborate foot-notes, full of poetical quotations and of a colonialism that is

almost reverential to Christopher Smart and Soame Jenyns. That the productions of these worthies might be rivalled in young America, Dennie summoned to his aid "the master-spirits of the nation." What he got was far from masterly. John Quincy Adams, son of the outgoing President and minister to Prussia, had recently made a journey through Silesia and had set down his impressions in a series of letters. These formed an important though anonymous feature of the new journal. Adams was a great man, but although he was later Professor of Belles-lettres at Harvard, something of a scholar, and even a small poet, he was far from being qualified to head the army of literary geniuses that Dennie proposed to gather. As for the other contributors, it must be confessed that an examination of the first volumes of *The Portfolio* does not make one anxious to determine the American names of the ladies and gentlemen who wrote over Roman signatures. Dennie himself continued his *Farrago* and *Lay Preacher*, but was often driven to fill his pages with ample extracts from new London books. Cowper's letters were a godsend to him, and to do him justice, although he was as reactionary in his tastes and opinions as any man could be, he was open-minded enough to welcome at first the newer poets. In nothing that he wrote could he escape magniloquence any more than he could fail to make the most of his intimacy with Thomas Moore during the latter's visit to America, or eschew the glories of a pea-green coat and large silver shoe-buckles. He held by the past in politics and literature, discouraged American neologisms, annotated Shakespeare, and became later a synonym for servile colonialism. Yet he had his merits,

and one is glad that he died early enough, in 1812, to avoid witnessing the outbreak of the second war with Great Britain. His journal, which after its fifth year became a monthly, survived him fifteen years, and deserves credit, along with the *Monthly Anthology* of Boston, for upholding conservative standards in a transitional age. In other words, Dennie and his school in a way did for literature what the Federalist party did for politics.

Indeed Dennie and *The Portfolio* serve to remind us of a half-forgotten corypheus of Federalism whose passing away they lamented in no measured tones. This was Fisher Ames of Massachusetts (1758-1808), a member of Congress during Washington's administrations and in the opinion of his contemporaries an orator and writer of rare eloquence. He was, in fact, the master of an elaborately polished style and of much classical culture; but his speeches, essays, and letters, with their refinement of thought and expression and their genteel pessimism, seem distinctly old-fashioned. They are not so interesting as the speeches of an eccentric statesman from the South who began to be a thorn in the sides of the Democrats about the time that Fisher Ames ceased to lament the decadence of his native land. This was the cultivated Virginian, John Randolph of Roanoke, who is worth mentioning here because he represents, as probably no other Anglo-Saxon does, the *ne plus ultra* of extemporized invective. The savage indignation of Swift, the mighty scorn of Dryden, the polished malignity of Pope, have no parallels in American literature, but it would be hard to point to any Briton who has displayed a gift equal to Randolph's for cowing or infuriating opponents



by his taunts. And it was a gift in part literary in character, as is shown by his famous reference to the "coalition of Blifil and Black George [J. Q. Adams and Henry Clay]—the combination unheard of till then, of the Puritan with the blackleg."

The men we have just been discussing were reactionaries, but we must remember that side by side with them men were writing with as much faith in the future as characterizes even the most optimistic American of the present day. Conspicuous among these hopeful, energetic souls was Noah Webster (1758-1843) of Connecticut, the famous lexicographer. We have little concern with his important dictionary of 1828, nor can we describe the varied, useful life he led after graduating with Joel Barlow at Yale. He looked ahead, while Barlow looked back, and hence it has come to pass that we revise and expand the dictionary and flout the epic poem. Webster, like Rush and Carey, forbore to express himself on few subjects of human inquiry. He issued political pamphlets, theorized about pestilences, discussed "banking institutions and insurance offices," wrote a spelling-book of which perhaps 70,000,000 copies have been sold, and published essays on hygiene, etymology, copyright, pedagogy, and what not. He was a queer mixture of a provincial and a shrewd Yankee, and although quaint and far from sprightly, is not unreadable, especially when he replies in true *Rambler* fashion to a letter from a jilted girl, or solemnly lectures a female seminary on the dangers of seduction, warning his hearers "in forming a matrimonial connection" to "bridle fancy, and reduce it to the control of reason."

Webster's advice about bridling fancy was surely taken to heart by another American writer of school-books, who is almost as famous as he—the exemplary Lindley Murray (1745–1826), author of the ubiquitous grammar. This was written and published at York, in England (1795). In fact, Murray's American life as described in his autobiography was entirely unintellectual. Still America must probably claim the *Memoirs* (1826), a pious work almost as sublimely prim as Cellini's was the reverse. Many a classic narrowly escaped Bowdlerizing at Murray's hands, for he had much at heart “a purified edition of the British Poets.” Yet for all his smugness the old valetudinarian was an interesting survival of the eighteenth century, and represented much that was best in his countrymen, a fact which led Dr. Benjamin Silliman, Professor of Chemistry in Yale, to indulge in the following cant: “Who would not rather be Mr. Murray, confined to his sofa, than Napoleon, the guilty possessor of a usurped crown, and the sanguinary oppressor of Europe?”

The egregious overemphasis of conventional morality apparent in the above citation is seen on all sides in the American literature of this period. We have found it in the romances; we can find it carried to a ridiculous degree in the immensely popular biographies of “Parson” Mason L. Weems (1760–1825) of Virginia, who in his *Life of George Washington* (1800) deliberately invented the celebrated cherry-tree and hatchet story in order to inculcate in young readers the virtue of truthfulness. His manipulation of the materials furnished him for his biography of General Francis Marion (1805) was ludicrously naïve, but the fiddling, book-agent parson was only in an ex-

treme way taking a liberty early editors allowed themselves, and he knew his public so thoroughly that his books still sell among readers who represent the intellectual level of large masses of the American people a century ago.

We have gone far afield, however, to gather such men as Webster, Murray, and Weems within the literary fold, and it is time to draw this chapter to a close. This may be done by briefly referring to the sparse literature of the Southern States. Besides Randolph and Weems and Dr. David Ramsay, the historian of South Carolina, there are scarcely any writers that deserve chronicling. From 1801 to 1825 a Virginian filled the presidential chair, and Southerners led in Congress and held important Cabinet positions. But although they were often men of wide reading, like Randolph, they rarely wrote save on political subjects. Here and there a stray poem, such as the pathetic lyric "Days of my Youth," by the Virginian jurist St. George Tucker, Randolph's step-father, floats down to us, but on the whole the Muses seem to languish much as they did thirty or forty years before, when a certain Mr. Baker, instead of applying to a local poet, wrote back to Bristol to his friend Chatterton for verses to be presented to a fair maiden of Charleston. One or two solid books, however, offer themselves to the chronicler—for example, Chief-Justice John Marshall's *Life of George Washington* (1804-07), in five goodly volumes, which gave a history of the colonies, as well as an elaborate discussion of the Revolutionary War and an account of Washington's presidency. Marshall was far greater as a jurist than as an historian, but his work is dignified and still possesses value.

More distinctly literary was another noted lawyer, William Wirt (1772-1834), a native of Maryland, but long resident in Virginia, who won fame for an eloquent and still declaimed speech delivered at the trial of Aaron Burr, and also for extended and distinguished public service as Attorney-General of the United States. Before entering politics seriously, Wirt cultivated essay writing of a florid type, contributing to periodicals papers which were afterward collected as *Letters of the British Spy* (1803) and *The Old Bachelor* (1810). The first named dealt in the main with various Virginian orators and was very popular; the second was a series of Spectatorish essays written in collaboration with friends. The Richmond circle over which Wirt presided was small, but probably as cultured as any of the other provincial groups. Yet even the writings of its chief figure would be forgotten had he not, pursuing his favourite theme of oratory, produced a volume entitled *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (1817). This work was so eulogistic and rhetorical that it attained a wide popularity, not yet entirely lost. Relying on Jefferson's waning memory and his own glowing imagination, Wirt created a false picture of the great orator which subsequent well-equipped biographers have not been able to destroy. The propagation of error is not a primary purpose of literature, but it is idle to deny literary power to a book that creates a legend. Wirt's amiable character and real abilities emerge more clearly, however, in such of his letters as have been published. It is plain that on the whole the eloquent advocate was in literature little more than a fluent and cultured amateur, yet when one compares the literary circle



of Richmond, of Charleston, or of Baltimore during this period with that of Edinburgh in the days of Mackenzie and Blacklock, one perceives that the effects of provincial isolation are much the same the world over, although they were longer obvious in America, and especially in the slave-holding South.

## CHAPTER X

### WRITERS OF FICTION (1809-29)

THE year with which this chapter begins is an important date in the history of American national development. It saw the publication of the delightful *History of New York*, by *Diedrich Knickerbocker*, the first book that gave solid evidence that the new republic could produce an author of distinguished charm and of genuine though not great originality. It saw also the plain failure of Jefferson's attempt to preserve neutrality toward those two great contestants Napoleon and the British Kingdom. It was marked, furthermore, by the inception of the administration which was finally driven into that War of 1812 out of which the United States emerged as a nation, composed no longer of colonial farmers, but of energetic, independent men of varied affairs. Madison and Monroe, representing the Revolutionary traditions, were to sit in the White House for sixteen years after Jefferson's withdrawal to Monticello, nor was the latter-named statesman's influence really to decline, but the actual conduct of politics was to be in the hands of younger men: Henry Clay, Andrew Jackson, John C. Calhoun, Daniel Webster—men who were to substitute an intense Americanism for the partisanship for Great Britain or France that had so di-

vided the generation passing away. It was no mere coincidence that Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and William Cullen Bryant, founders of the national literature, should have been contemporaries of these younger and more progressive statesmen. Neither in literature nor in politics, of course, any more than in religion and manners, was the break with the past so sharp as even the most carefully selected words of the historian seem to imply. John Randolph, for example, held his own against Clay in more ways than one, and eighteenth-century writers like Noah Webster and Carey continued to instruct their fellow-countrymen long after Irving had begun to delight them. Joel Barlow's pretentious *Columbiad* preceded Mr. Knickerbocker's less formidable production by only two years, yet, while the old order survived, it steadily lost ground just as it was doing in the mother-country, the victory of the new literature being somewhat later in America, and, as might have been expected, that of the new politics somewhat earlier. Andrew Jackson's elevation to the presidency, in 1829, not merely preceded the Reform Bill, but marked a greater advance in democracy. American authors like Irving and Bryant had not made a corresponding advance upon their eighteenth-century predecessors, or so completely proved themselves to represent a new nationality; yet, as we shall soon perceive, they had moved forward to a considerable extent and with a dignity which Jackson and his Democratic followers might have imitated with advantage.

Readers of Irving's pleasant letters at once learn why, although he was always genuinely patriotic and fairly abreast of his own generation, he should seem less of a

home-made product than Andrew Jackson, and indeed to many persons something very much resembling an American Goldsmith. WASHINGTON IRVING was born in New York City, April 3, 1783. Although his Christian name bespoke the Whig affiliations of his family, his environment during his formative years was in many respects really British. His father was of good Scotch lineage, his mother the daughter of an English clergyman, the softer strain probably predominating in the boy and in his brothers and sisters. The maternal element in his composition perhaps accounts for his early and surreptitious visits to the John Street Theatre, for his delight in such books as Hoole's translation of the *Orlando*, and for the impression made upon him by the scenery of the Hudson and the Catskills. It was perhaps the paternal strain that kept him always true to his country in spite of long residences abroad, and, in the end, true to his own genius in spite of a constant inclination to take life too easily. Out of a delicate youth, descended and trained as Irving was, no raw democratic product could have been developed. He could by no possibility have become a Jackson or a Walt Whitman. But he represented well the ideals of the class of people from whom he sprang—ideals not less truly American because inherited from Great Britain.

For reasons of health Irving received little schooling and did not go to college, but travelled as far as Canada and amused himself by publishing essays, appropriately subscribed "Jonathan Oldstyle." These brought him a professional visit from that wide-awake editor Charles Brockden Brown, but he was too ill to continue writing, and was sent to Europe in 1804, not to die, as the captain



of the packet thought, but to attain a fair measure of health. His adventures in France and Italy, as detailed in his letters, make good reading; they also explain much of his aptitude for investing old-world subjects with an old-world charm. Other young Americans, like Washington Allston, who almost persuaded Irving to become a painter, were then leaving prosaic America to seek inspiration and enlightenment in Europe; but those who were left behind were by no means lacking in aspiration or at times in a fresh and healthy independence. A group of such sprightly New Yorkers received Irving on his return, in 1806, and his experiences with them furnished him later with a portion of his material for *Salmagundi*. They also furnish the student with proof that within a decade American society had lost something of its stiltedness, even if the Della Crusicans were still writing, or if Dennie, whom Irving now met in Philadelphia, was doing his best to emulate the glory of Soame Jenyns.

Irving himself emulated the glory of Addison, although, as he had just been admitted to the bar, Coke and Blackstone might more logically have claimed his allegiance. With his elder brother William and the latter's brother-in-law James Kirk Paulding (1779-1860), he undertook, in January, 1807, to conduct a miscellany entitled *Salmagundi*, which succeeded in amusing both the town and its buoyant editors. The publisher reaped the substantial profits of the enterprise, but Irving and Paulding were doubtless helped forward by it upon their respective literary careers. The reader of to-day is under no obligation to peruse the twenty numbers of *Salmagundi*, but he need not smile at the sensation it produced in New York,

or at the pious zeal of the editor who long afterward reprinted it. It had at least the unique merit of being light in a heavy period, and of giving more than faint indications of the urbane humour to be found in abundance in the mature work of its greatest collaborator. Twelve years later Paulding, who had meanwhile written some fairly effective parodies and satires, among them *The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan*, which did for the War of 1812 much what Hopkinson's *Pretty Story* had done for the Revolution, composed unassisted a second series of *Salmagundi*. Times had changed, however, and the resuscitation was a failure. Nor was Paulding, in spite of his real talents, which made him Secretary of the Navy in Van Buren's Cabinet, ever able completely to emerge from the shadows cast upon him by the fame of the two chief Knickerbocker writers, Irving and Cooper, both his juniors. He wrote voluminously, trying poetry, prose satire, biography, proslavery apologetics, and fiction, but when he died a new and greater literature had grown up around him, much as huge cities like Chicago have grown up around old and primitive pioneers. Some of his romances, such as *Westward Ho!* a tale of Kentucky, and especially his *Dutchman's Fireside* (1831), a story of old New York, may still be read with a slight interest, but they must not be allowed to detain us from following the career of the more fortunate Irving.

Shortly after the publication of *Salmagundi* fortune seemed to frown on Irving. The attractive young woman to whom he was engaged died of consumption, and his impressionable nature received a deep shock. He never fully recovered from it, living and dying loyal to her memory,

but its effect upon his career was probably beneficial, so far at least as his contemporary reputation was concerned. For it seems likely that tender sentiment replaced some of his vivacity, and that it was this sentiment, as exhibited in such a story as "The Broken Heart," that made him dear to many of his early readers. To some modern readers he appears at times sentimental, and, while it may be held with considerable justice that this view is unfair to him, it is at any rate clear that he is more nearly at his best in weirdly romantic tales like "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Spectre Bridegroom," and in unalloyed humour, such as is seen in the better portions of the famous *History of New York*.

This burlesque history, which for many persons is the first readable American book, with the exception of Franklin's *Autobiography*, was begun by Irving, in conjunction with his brother Peter, as a parody of *The Picture of New York*, by Dr. Samuel Latham Mitchill, a scientist of encyclopædic learning, who played in his adopted city much the part played in Philadelphia by Dr. Rush. Peter Irving went to Europe, however, and Washington abandoned the parody for a comic history of the little known Dutch occupation of "the renowned Island of New York." He invented a charmingly naïve and garrulous old antiquary on whom to father it, Diedrich Knickerbocker, and made use of enough real history and multifarious learning, as well as of shrewd philosophy, to perplex some of his simple-minded readers and to annoy some of Dutch descent. This elaborate material and machinery also served the better purpose of continually checking his exuberance of spirits, with the result that his book, while often comic,

is in the main truly humorous—is, perhaps, as successful an example of humour on a very elaborate and sustained scale as can easily be named. It is not thoroughly sustained, for most readers would probably agree that, leaving out the preliminary matter, authentic interest and delight are not aroused before the third book, “in which is recorded the golden reign of Wouter Van Twiller.” But here and in the books that follow a genuine master of humour and genial satire is surely revealed, although one must admit that Irving’s countrymen are probably better qualified than foreigners to enjoy it fully. They are also better qualified to appreciate the creative literary force of a book which has made the “Knickerbocker legend” do service for the rather prosaic actual history of New York, the writing of which it greatly stimulated. From December 6, 1809, when it appeared in Philadelphia—Irving had it published there in order that its true character might not be divulged—until the present day, it has never lacked admiring readers in America, and after its author became known in England it obtained some favour oversea. But perhaps as good a proof as any of its excellence is the fact that Walter Scott not long after its appearance enjoyed reading it aloud and declared that its author reminded him greatly of Swift and considerably of Sterne. Irving was not innocent of indebtedness to these masters, but his success was due in the main to his own fortunately nourished genius.

After laying unconsciously the foundations of modern American literature, Irving took a longer rest than a writer of really affluent genius would seem to have required. He appears to have shared the then not uncom-



mon aversion to professional authorship, and rather than depend on his pen or stick to the law, he became a far from strenuous partner in a commercial house conducted by two of his brothers. He did help for a while to edit the *Analectic Magazine* of Philadelphia, and he actually saw some rather mild service in the New York militia, but at the close of hostilities, in 1815, he gladly betook himself to England, where he had a brother and sister and friends living. The affairs of his business enterprise, which failed in 1818, occupied him for a time, but these on the whole sat lightly upon him, and it is easy to perceive that he was as completely happy and at home in England as though he had been native to its soil. Yet so well poised was his nature that it is impossible to think of him as in any way a renegade from his own country—a fact which doubtless helped to endear him to men like Scott and Campbell. Nor was it merely the people, the scenery, and the antiquities of England and Scotland that fascinated him. He also spent much of his time reading in the British Museum, thus forming an acquaintance with the elder writers, especially the poets, which stood him in good stead in his next book.

This was the famous *Sketch-Book*, which was sent over, in 1819, to New York and Philadelphia for publication in parts. The first part, containing “Rip Van Winkle,” won instant and wide favour, which was extended to the whole miscellany. When Murray a year later published the work in England, its author’s international reputation was secure. Even to-day, after the lapse of over eighty years, this reputation probably still chiefly depends upon this book, which continues to be widely read in England, Amer-

ica, and Germany. Sophisticated readers doubtless care less than their fathers did for "Geoffrey Crayon's" purity of diction, for his eighteenth-century graces of style, for his pathos, and for his sentiment. Some of his excursions in rural England and in old-time literature have lost the charm of novelty. Ocean voyages, Mr. Roscoe the historian, country churches, lovelorn village beauties, are not subjects to whet jaded appetites. Yet sophistication has its disadvantages, especially when it blinds us to the level excellence of Irving's felicitous style, and to his merits as a master of the literary medley, if the existence of such a form of composition be admitted. In the *Sketch-Book* Irving showed himself to be an accomplished traveller, critic, essayist, satirist, humourist, and short-story writer. In the last-named capacity he was a pioneer who, when at his best, as in "Rip Van Winkle," "The Spectre Bridegroom," and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," has not been clearly surpassed by his successors Poe and Hawthorne, or by any British writer. If he had done nothing else but develop this delicate form of art and give literary immortality to a fascinating character and to the scenery of the Hudson and the Catskills, he would have deserved grateful remembrance. But he did more. He revealed the true England to America, he did much to reveal her own genius to America, and he revealed to England not a little of her own charm. His "Christmas Eve" and other sketches, supplemented by *Bracebridge Hall*, gave pictures of English country life from which Dickens was to profit later. He made himself an important link in an important chain of English writers. He derived from Addison and Goldsmith, but was obviously less naïve than the latter, thus

leading on to Dickens. A sketch like "Little Britain," for example, is more premonitory of the nineteenth-century humourist than reminiscential of the eighteenth-century one.

While Irving in the course of his long life often repeated some of the successes achieved by portions of the *Sketch-Book* and developed new lines of work, it may fairly be held that this popular miscellany marked the culmination of his career. He was now famous and well paid, and could afford to cultivate his taste for travel. He hunted with the King of Saxony, collaborated with the playwright John Howard Payne in Paris, and was finally drawn to romantic Spain, for the fame of which he was to do such service among the English-speaking peoples. It was a leisurely life, but in 1822, thanks partly to a hint from Tom Moore, *Bracebridge Hall* saw the light, and two years later the *Tales of a Traveller*. Of the first it is sufficient to say that its genial characters and their country-house setting, the restrained humour of "The Stout Gentleman," and the varied interest of "Dolph Heyliger" make full amends for the thinness of some of the sketches and for the comparative jejuneness of "The Student of Salamanca." With regard to the merits of the second volume—Irving's most elaborate venture in fiction—opinions were divided at the time of its publication, and may well be at the present day. In America it has been used as a text-book for schools, yet surely some of the efforts at the weird, the whole of the belated and frustrated "Buckthorne and his Friends," and the Italian banditti stories fail to represent their author at his best. But just as surely Scott was right when he praised the grotesque qual-

ities of "The Bold Dragoon," and a good word may be said for the stories with an American setting, one of which, "Wolfert Webber," may have given Poe hints for his "Gold Bug."

Irving's interest in Spanish history first showed itself on a considerable scale in his *Life of Columbus*, published in 1828. The three volumes, which brought him in \$18,000, but did not repay the publishers, grew out of an abandoned piece of translation, and were a proof both of his scholarly tastes and of his unquenched ambition. They ushered in, however, a period of what may be styled semi-creative work, a fact which rather goes to show that his genius, no matter how authentic it might be, was deficient in sustained power. Be this as it may, *The Life of Columbus*, which in an abridged form won favour and replenished Murray's purse, was an excellent biography of its kind, and doubtless served to stimulate the writing of two of its author's most popular books, *The Conquest of Granada* (1829) and *The Alhambra* (1832). The earlier of these does not suffer so much from the introduction of the imaginary chronicler, Fray Agapida, as it does from the monotony resulting from the description of the numerous encounters between Moor and Spaniard, romantic though these may be. The later volume has been called "The Spanish Sketch-Book," and deserves the title, being an excellent medley of charming descriptive sketches and of tales, which, while they do not reach the level of "The Spectre Bridegroom," could have been written at that time by few or no other Anglo-Saxon authors.

While he was living in the Alhambra, in 1829, Irving heard of his appointment as secretary of legation in Lon-



don. Three pleasant years followed, and then he returned to America, where he received modestly the honours heaped upon a long absent son who had won the literary fame for which so many Americans had been striving. He did not really settle down, however, for the unexplored West attracted the matured man, who as a youth had enjoyed excursions in Canada and in the thinly settled parts of New York. Three books resulted from this new interest—*A Tour on the Prairies*, *Astoria*, written in conjunction with a nephew, and *Adventures of Captain Bonneville*—works slight in substance and chiefly memorable as showing that Irving fully recognised the fact that Europe is not by divine appointment the sole home of charm. He could not do for the West what Cooper had done or what Parkman was to do, but he was not blind to its wonders. Then followed a little miscellaneous writing, until, in 1842, he accepted the mission to Spain, a position which was certainly his due. He filled it well for about four years, but found little time to work on the elaborate biography of Washington which seemed a fitting labour for his declining years. When he returned to his pleasant home, Sunnyside, he superintended a successful edition of his writings, wrote biographies of Mahomet and of Goldsmith, the latter being in his best vein as an essayist, although of no biographical value, collected some miscellaneous sketches and stories into a volume entitled *Wolfer's Roost*, and toiled conscientiously over his *Life of Washington*. The first volume of this appeared in 1855, the fifth and last some months before his death, on November 28, 1859. Although not great in any sense, this last work of an aged and never robust author

should not be spoken of save with respect. He was not a born biographer or a trained scholar, but he produced a work fairly worthy of himself and of his subject, one that has been admirably supplemented since but not supplanted by any biography composed upon the same scale. It was not Irving's fault that the single volume devoted to Washington's presidency did not bring out adequately the latter's greatness as a statesman. Historical scholarship has made great strides in America since Irving's day, and he was after all a humourist, an essayist, and a story-writer. We are justified, therefore, in passing lightly over his main works in other categories and in omitting entirely to consider the posthumous volume entitled *Spanish Papers*, and his unfortunate account of the life of the precocious poetess Margaret Miller Davidson.

Such in outline was the career of the first successful American man of letters. It is not surprising to find that his essential greatness has been seriously questioned by many students and readers of the literature to which he first gave a fair measure of self-confidence. His old-fashioned style has not enough preciousness to suit some moderns, his eye for the picturesque seems rather untrained, his ideas are a little too obvious, his sentiment lacks distinction. From these charges Irving cannot be entirely acquitted. He was not subtle, although his humour was delicate; he was not profound; he was not bizarre. Although a true American, he was not an aggressive one, and through his writing for and about two countries and his dealing with the history of a third, he lost some of the intensity and force of appeal possessed by writers whose roots strike deep and firm in their native soil. Yet it may

be justly urged, on the other hand, that the present generation is a trifle hypercritical, and that Irving's wholesomeness of nature, his easy grace of style, his lambent humour, his sympathy with his fellow-men of whatever class or nationality, his sense for romantic charm—in a word, his lovable personality and his broad, genuine literary powers—fully warrant his admirers in continuing to enjoy the four or five volumes in which his best work is contained, and in joining his name without apology to those of Goldsmith and Lamb. The British writers, whatever their superiority, would not disdain his company. And he is worthy to keep the best of literary company in his native country. He was not merely a pioneer who blazed the way for others; he cleared his own land and reared upon it a durable and attractive structure. If he was not a truly great and original writer, he was at least a most important one to America and, as has been already pointed out, he was as thoroughly representative of his epoch and social class as any author can well be. He is not an American Goldsmith; he is an Anglo-Saxon Irving.

The writer who two years after the publication of *The Sketch-Book* advanced appreciably the standing of American literature in the eyes both of his countrymen and of foreigners was not an American Scott, but an Anglo-Saxon Cooper. Since 1809, the year of the Knickerbocker History, a number of new writers had emerged, some of whose books will require attention later, but it was not until 1821, the year of *The Spy*, that America became aware that she possessed a second author worthy of a place beside the best that contemporary England and Europe could show. Some Americans, indeed, refused to

recognise this fact, and indignantly endeavoured to refute such persons as had the hardihood to assert that Cooper equalled or surpassed Scott, not so much because this opinion was unsound, as because the one romancer was Scotch and the other American. But such abject colonialism was doomed to pass away, and Cooper was popular with the mass of his countrymen until infirmities of temper on both sides produced the unpleasant results soon to be described.

Like Washington Irving, JAMES FENIMORE COOPER (1789–1851) belongs to the State of New York, and furnishes additional proof that for the time literary primacy had passed from Pennsylvania and New England. It was at Burlington, New Jersey, however, that he was born on September 15, 1789. His father was of English stock; his mother, from whom he got his middle name, of Swedish descent; both lines having profited from Quaker virtues. After the Revolution William Cooper so developed a large tract of land in New York that before the birth of Fenimore, his eleventh child, he had laid out the site of Cooperstown, on Otsego Lake. To this frontier settlement the infant was carried when scarcely more than a year old, and there amid primeval woods not yet deserted by wild beasts and Indians he passed his early boyhood. A large mansion soon took the place of the original log-house, and William Cooper, as an enterprising American should do, went to Congress. But the boy's changed circumstances did not obliterate the first impressions made by untrammelled Nature upon his mind; they only enlarged the experiences upon which his mature powers were to work. The beginning of the new century found him at Albany studying under an accomplished clergyman of English birth and prejudices,



and again his mind proved impressionable, somewhat to his detriment both as man and as writer. In January, 1803, he entered Yale, but preferred outdoor life to classroom exercises, and escapades of no serious character to study. The result was dismissal, a controversy between his father and the college authorities, and the loss on his own part of that chastening of genius which even an inadequate academic training often gives—a chastening which could scarcely have diminished Cooper's creative energy, and would almost surely have improved the tone of his mind and his writings. Yet if his dismissal from Yale was chiefly responsible for his entering the navy, lovers of literature have no cause to quarrel with the obdurate faculty, for without active service at sea Cooper would probably not have added a new domain to fiction.

No naval school then existing, the youth shipped on a merchant vessel as a sailor before the mast. He visited London and Gibraltar, and on his return obtained a midshipman's commission. From 1808 to 1811, a period of warlike restlessness, he saw both lake and ocean service, but then cut short his naval career by a marriage into a family of Tory descent. This step was later imputed to him for unrighteousness by ultra-patriotic countrymen, but it brought Cooper unalloyed domestic happiness, and in *The Spy* he afterward used his knowledge of Westchester County, his wife's home, just as in *The Pathfinder* he used his previous experiences as a brig-builder on Lake Ontario. For several years, however, he had no idea of being anything but a country gentleman, whether in Westchester or at Cooperstown, and the children that delighted him were of his own flesh, not of his imagination. An odd

accident changed the whole course of his life. Reading one day a dull British novel of the kind that American publishers pirated with all the fewer scruples since native fiction was neither in demand nor obtainable in any quantity, he remarked to his wife that he believed he could write a better story himself. She dared him to try, and encouraged his labours, which, countenanced by some complacent friends, resulted in a tale of English life entitled *Precaution*. It was published anonymously in New York late in 1820, and attracted the little interest it deserved. Lapse of time and its author's fame have not made it easier to read, although the fact that in it he exploited his religious narrowness and carved the first of his long line of wooden women renders the story important to the close student of his works.

The genesis of *The Spy* as related in Professor Lounsbury's admirable biography of Cooper makes strange and entertaining reading. Although *Precaution* had not been a success, it had been reprinted in England and had passed as the work of an Englishman. This in itself was a matter of consequence in the eyes of its patriotic author, much more in those of his colonial-minded friends. Perhaps it was worth while to make a second venture. Fortunately some of his friends wished to see him do for America a service similar to that which the "Author of *Waverley*" was doing for Scotland, and they pointed out to him that he was likely to attain greater success in dealing with native and familiar than with foreign themes. Following their advice, he naturally turned to the Revolution and to Westchester County which had been the scene of constant fighting, just as a few years later Balzac, in *The Chouans*,

was to turn to the civil war in Brittany. But Cooper was more fortunate than Balzac in one important particular. He had once heard John Jay tell the story of a spy who had served the American cause most fearlessly and unselfishly. Developing the slight hints thus given, he created the noble figure of Harvey Birch, and added a great character to the world's fiction—a character appealing profoundly to the general public's sense for pathos and for romantic contrasts. *The Chouans* contains no such character, universal in its appeal, but Cooper, ironically enough, hardly perceived the importance of the story he was writing, and left the first volume set up for months before he could bring himself to compose the second, so dubious was he as to the success of a native novel with his colonial countrymen. And when he began again to write he was willing to put together the last chapter and have it set up and paged in order that the publisher might be assured against the chances that the book might be too spun out.

It is safe to say that few readers of *The Spy* have ever had occasion to suspect that it was composed in such a hesitating manner. This is perhaps due to the fact that Cooper had not merely chanced upon an effective character, but had struck his true vein—the story of adventure. In a sense *The Spy* is an historical novel; the fact that it is Washington and no other with whom Harvey Birch has his memorable interview undoubtedly adds to the charm and power of the book. Yet it is probably because Cooper knew personally the type of men he was describing and the scenes in which his story was laid that the average reader is not greatly tempted to skip its less

absorbing pages, and what one most cares for, after the personality of Harvey Birch, is the movement of the well-sustained narrative. Perhaps if Cooper had made his spy not merely die in the War of 1812, but serve in it instead of in the Revolution—that is, if he had made his story practically a contemporaneous one—it would have been nearly as interesting to modern readers as it actually is. In other words, while Cooper undoubtedly won his first success as a disciple of Scott, he followed the latter in his capacity as a novelist of action rather than as a painter, a restorer of the past. The story of action belonging to no special age or clime could be easily translated to America without involving Cooper in obligations greater than one genuinely creative artist may owe to another, and the translation once made, Cooper's genius was equal to utilizing forest, prairie, and ocean in such a way as to set him among the great original writers of the world.

This position was not won for him by *The Spy* on its publication at the close of 1821. But by March of the next year a third edition had been called for and Harvey Birch had been applauded on the stage. Before the year was over England had received the book favourably, to America's great delight, and Cooper had been introduced to France, which has never ceased to honour him. He took his success modestly enough, for he wrote his next story, *The Pioneers*, not so much to add to his laurels and his income, as to determine whether he had a real vocation for writing. He was soon assured on this point, and had the satisfaction of knowing that a book thoroughly American—for *The Pioneers* described scenes and characters



familiar to him in his boyhood—could hold its own with the stories of dukes and duchesses he had shortly before imitated. It was the first in composition, though not in logical order of development, of the five *Leather-Stocking Tales* on which his reputation chiefly rests. It is the least interesting of the series, but this fact is of little consequence in view of the great romances, and especially the admirable character, that Cooper was impelled to develop as soon as he had convinced himself that the life of the backwoods was a proper material for fiction. For Cooper was thorough-going in his dogmatism, as his scolding prefaces plainly show, and if he had convinced himself that his new departure was a mistaken one, he would probably have let prairie and forest and the half-evoked figure of Natty Bumppo beckon him on in vain.

In a way it was his dogmatic temper of mind that led him to introduce into fiction that other noble and boundless element, the sea. Arguing with some acquaintances in New York, where he took up his residence shortly after his fame was established, he maintained that *The Pirate*, not yet acknowledged by Scott, must have been written by a landsman, and he subsequently wrote *The Pilot*, in spite of timorous friends, in order to prove that a real sailor could make an interesting romance out of his knowledge and experiences. Theory never stood him or any other writer in much better stead. Although its composition was impeded by the death of a child and by his own illness, the book when published early in 1824 realized its author's expectations and delighted its numerous readers. Long Tom Coffin and the Pilot himself—the redoubtable Paul Jones—would alone have made the

story a remarkable one; but to give life to ships and the sea was more than to give life to sailors, and was something that no other writer had done or really tried to do. Though many, to adapt Tennyson's lines, have since grown the flower, it seems plain that Cooper furnished them with the seeds, and that the flowers he grew are on the whole the fairest of all. *The Pilot*, *The Red Rover* (1828), *The Two Admirals*, and *Wing and Wing* (1842) are all thrilling narratives that stir the pulses of any man who loves the ocean and a ship. They have obvious defects, and we are told by experts that Cooper's own theory with regard to the deficiencies of *The Pirate* is borne out by *The Two Admirals*, in which the handling of fleets is described without sufficient knowledge. But the main effects produced by this very book are surely fine, and there is some superb pursuing and escaping in *Wing and Wing*—both of them romances of Cooper's later years—while even in books that are acknowledged failures the breeze of interest begins to blow as soon as we are fairly afloat. We need not try to determine whether *The Red Rover* deserves its popularity as much as *The Pilot* does, nor need we stop to criticise such uneven stories as *The Water Witch* (1830), *Afloat and Ashore* (1844), in both parts of which the hero, Miles Wallingford, is no more restless for the sea than the reader is, or the almost melodramatic *Jack Tier* (1848). *The Sea Lions* (1849) is worth mentioning if only because as a whaling story it cannot compare with Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, and because it describes with great power the horrors of an antarctic winter. It is also interesting because the death scene of the miserly old deacon makes one sus-

pect that Cooper had realized the greatness of *Eugénie Grandet*, to the author of which he was indebted for one of the most generous yet discriminating tributes ever paid by one man of genius to another. But although minute criticism of this large section of Cooper's writings is not needed, it is surely necessary to a proper appreciation of his ability and of his service to the literature of his country and the world that we should realize the priority, the uniqueness, and the importance of his sea tales. They are not only full of excellently, or at least well drawn sailors, and of exciting incidents and situations that prove the copiousness of his faculty of invention; they are also full of the charm and majesty of the sea and of the grace and speed of the ships that traverse it. In other words, with all their looseness of style and construction, they lift the story of adventure into the realms of poetry. Cooper did this in the *Leather-Stocking Tales*; that he should have repeated so remarkable a performance is a clear proof that he possessed an original and powerful genius. Humour and the faculty of giving life to his characters at will he did not possess, hence he must rank below the greatest masters of his craft; but this is not to say that he deserves the sneers or the patronage of the persons who turn him over to their boys in apparent ignorance of the fact that the admiration of unsophisticated minds is one of the best tests of large and wholesome literary excellence.

After his success with *The Pilot*, Cooper, who had become in New York something of a lion and had founded and dominated a literary club, turned once more to the battle-grounds of the Revolution and planned to give *The*

*Spy* several companion volumes. In accordance with this design, *Lionel Lincoln; or, The Leaguer of Boston* was written with a meticulous accuracy worthy of a latter-day realist. The strictly military portions of the narrative showed the good effects of its author's conscientiousness, but on the whole the romance was a failure because it was an incongruous mixture of history and mystery. A year later (February, 1826) Cooper atoned for *Lionel Lincoln* by publishing *The Last of the Mohicans*, probably the best and most popular of all his romances. Merely as a story of thrilling adventures it would be worthy of high praise, but it is much more than this. It is full of the poetry of the forest, which is especially embodied in the great hunter Hawkeye, in whom the nobler elemental qualities of the race are "bound each to each by natural piety." The more sophisticated characters do not specially attract, but they at least pass muster, and the Indians Chingachgook and Uncas are entirely worthy of Natty's friendship. Time was when Cooper's Indians were patronizingly regarded as sentimental idealizations, but competent anthropologists have of late been treating them with more respect. Ingenious persons still continue to assure us that Cooper's heroes could not have performed this or that feat in the given time and space, but their strictures are sufficiently answered by the statement that measuring poles and chronometers have not yet been accepted as necessary appliances of criticism.

Cooper's fame was now at its height, and he could afford a long visit to Europe. From June, 1826, to November, 1833, he moved from country to country, receiving many civilities and gathering multifarious knowledge which he



did not always put to good use. He was too typical a democrat to make a favourable impression everywhere, but he was also too open-minded not to perceive that in many respects America was far behind Europe. He was very straightforward, and believed that his success as a writer made it incumbent upon him to lecture both worlds upon their shortcomings. Such a delusion, dangerous at any time, was particularly dangerous then, for Europe half feared and wholly misunderstood America, while the latter was afflicted with a most acute form of provincial sensitiveness. Ignorant and prejudiced travellers were doing their best to make relations still more strained, especially between America and Great Britain; but if the genial Irving could not succeed in preventing the growth of a literature of exacerbation of which the well-known books of Mrs. Trollope and Dickens are sufficiently representative, it was certain that the strenuous, dogmatic Cooper would fail egregiously. It is unnecessary to describe his *Notions of the Americans, Picked up by a Travelling Bachelor* (1828) further than to say that while, being Cooper's, it contained many good things, its setting, as a series of letters written by a supposed foreigner, was antiquated and ineffective, and its matter open to many criticisms. He lost money on it, and won America few admirers. His *Letter to Lafayette* decreased his popularity among his own countrymen, rather to their discredit. His frequent flings at England made him enemies there, and while he could defend himself doughtily, as against Hazlitt in the *Letter to his Countrymen*, he suffered much and accomplished no manner of good.

His fiction, as a matter of course, began to suffer

to an equal or greater extent. This is not true of *The Prairie* (1827) and *The Red Rover* (1828), for the death of Leatherstocking in the former is one of the best scenes Cooper ever painted, and the story, although not the best of its series, has many other good features. But *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* (1829) was a dull performance, partly because Cooper could never be just to New Englanders, and the three romances with a European setting, *The Bravo* (1831), *The Heidenmauer* (1832), and *The Headsman* (1833), were, with the exception of the first, dismal failures. *The Bravo* reminds us of what is probably the most distinct gain made by Cooper during his long residence in Europe—his acquisition of a genuine love for Italy and the Italians, especially for the beautiful Mediterranean coast, which is never long out of sight in *Wing and Wing*. Such a love may fairly be held to counterbalance whatever tendencies to philistinism may be discovered in Cooper's character and writings. Unfortunately his often-repeated comparison of the harbour of Naples with that of New York, to the disadvantage of the latter, did not increase his popularity with the fellow-citizens to whom he finally returned in no very amiable mood.

At first he took up his residence in New York, but the bustle and energy of the city, indeed of the whole country, were now alien to his spirit, and he determined to repair his father's house at Cooperstown and make it his permanent home. But he did not find peace. He plunged unnecessarily into the political quarrels of the Jacksonian epoch, and as the story of adventure was no longer very popular, even his literary fame could not silence the enemies he made. He replied to their clamours by strictures

upon the rawness of America, which were much more veracious than politic. Then he became involved in controversies with some local trespassers upon his property at Cooperstown, and the newspapers of the State passed all bounds of decency in their denunciations of him. He was not the man to submit tamely, and he brought suits against the leading Whig journals, his chief antagonist being the notorious politician Thurlow Weed, who, ironically enough, was a great admirer of his victim's novels. These suits Cooper conducted personally, and it is a proof of his character and acumen that he carried the juries against the editors, although even his warmest admirers must wish that his closing years had been more decorously employed. Yet a grim, solitary fighter always arouses sympathy, and whatever Cooper's infirmities of taste, it must be confessed that during the last two decades of his life he was treated outrageously by American and British critics and journalists who were not worthy to unloose the latches of his shoes. Especially galling to him were the controversies aroused by his careful and interesting *History of the United States Navy* (1839), but scandals seem to be natural concomitants of feats at arms in an age that has claims to be considered civilized. It is pleasant to add that although Cooper did not recover his popularity during his lifetime, public animosity against him so decreased that shortly after his death, which took place on September 14, 1851, it was possible to hold a successful memorial meeting in New York City at which William Cullen Bryant delivered an adequately appreciative address.

Cooper's controversies, besides embittering his life and showing up in unpleasant relief the crassness of his epoch,

had a bad effect upon his literary work, and are thus specially to be regretted by the student of American literature. It is true that after his return home he completed the *Leather-Stocking Tales* by the addition of *The Pathfinder* (1840) and *The Deerslayer* (1841), the former of which almost deserves the high praise Balzac gave it. We have already mentioned other romances composed after 1833 that are by no means lacking in merit. But the fact remains that he wrote too many books and that some of them were so bad that they reacted on the fame of his masterpieces and cast a blight upon his romances of secondary yet genuine merits. In consequence Cooper's "Works" seem to be a much drearier waste or desert than they really are. Chief among the truly wretched books stands *Home as Found* (1838), the sequel to *Homeward Bound*, itself not a possession forever, but at least tolerable because it contains a sea chase and a wreck. It is hard not to sympathize with the contemporary Americans who did not receive thankfully the criticisms lavished by the priggish Effingham family. How Cooper could have created these monstrosities is one of the marvels of literature, but as three years before he had tried his hand at a Swiftian satire in the unreadable *Monikins*, it is perhaps fair to conclude that he was one of those writers who, when they fall, do it with all their weight. *Mercedes of Castile* (1840), *Wyandotte* (1843), *The Oak Openings* (1848), and *The Ways of the Hour* (1850), Cooper's last novel, are probably classed by most readers with *The Monikins*, but the first named at least deserves praise for the pages that describe the initial voyage of Columbus. The last named is frankly incomprehensible, viewed as the work of a vet-



eran writer who must have known that the sensational story he was telling was thoroughly improbable. Improbability is also pushed to extreme limits in *The Crater* (1847), but it is possible to read with interest the account of how two shipwrecked sailors make the emerging top of a South Sea volcano blossom as the rose. It is hard, however, to keep from laughing when one finds Cooper peopling his new Eden with silly politicians and wrangling preachers who are finally got rid of by the sudden submersion of the island.

Yet there is a little-read series of purpose-novels written by Cooper that deserves brief mention and some praise. This consists of *Satanstoe*, *The Chain-Bearer*, and *The Redskins* (1845-46)—Cooper's contribution to what is known as the Anti-rent War which was waged by tenants and demagogues against the proprietors of certain great New York estates. The aging novelist, who had had his own troubles with contemners of property rights, naturally took the conservative side, and as naturally did it little good by his fulminations. The last of his series, *The Redskins*, in which his sympathies are most fully displayed, is dull and ineffective, but this fact should not have obscured the merits of *Satanstoe* as a picture of life in colonial New York. In other stories, such as *The Water-Witch*, *Wyandotte*, and *Afloat and Ashore*, Cooper had succeeded only partially in describing the old-time life to which he reverted all the more fondly because he was so completely out of sympathy with modern democracy. In *Satanstoe* he succeeded admirably. Nor did he forget his old cunning as a master of the narrative of adventure, for the account of the battle for life by the

sleighting party amid the ice gorges of the Hudson is in his best vein. The middle novel of the series, *The Chain-Bearer*, is of only medium interest, but it contains one of Cooper's best-drawn characters, the grim squatter, Thousand Acres.

Space is wanting to discuss Cooper's miscellaneous writings, his volumes of travels, his naval sketches, his political lucubrations, but this is not matter for regret, since it is only as a romancer that he is read to-day. It is more important to say something about his position in literature. This is a subject on which many opinions have been and are still held, but it seems clear that as time goes on his claim to rank among the great masters of fiction will be more and more ungrudgingly allowed. He stands the test of cosmopolitan fame better than any other American save Poe. If he did not originate a movement in fiction he enlarged one in two important directions. The romance of the forest and prairie and the romance of the sea are his creations, and no other writer has since done them so well. No one else has come so near writing an adequate epic of the settlement of America—one of the most truly heroic subjects in literature. When he is at his best as a novelist of adventure, he can hold the imaginations of his readers, whether they be boys or gray-haired men. When the spirit of the ocean or of the woods is upon him he becomes a genuine poet; when he is dealing with hunters and trappers and Indians and sailors, he becomes a genuine dramatist. Perhaps not even Scott has given the world such an individualized creation as Natty Bumppo. In view of all this it seems idle to deny that Cooper is an eminent writer. But it should be always

remembered that with Scott and Balzac he belongs to the class of what we may call the large geniuses as opposed to the fine geniuses, and that the large genius is rarely, save in truly inspired moments, an impeccable artist. To criticise such a genius minutely as one would a sonneteer is almost ridiculous, yet this is the sort of criticism Cooper constantly receives. It is no wonder that the Titan could not bear it with equanimity during his life, or that his fame cannot stand it now. Never a great stylist, he is often an execrable one. Never a creator of character at will, he is often guilty of endeavouring to impart life to blocks of wood, which too frequently he clothes with habiliments usually reserved for women. Except when he is dealing with Indians, hunters, and sailors, he is a wretched psychologist. He has no compassion upon his readers when once his prejudices are aroused. He thinks it his duty to prevent his dull heroines from marrying any man whose religious orthodoxy is suspected, he valiantly champions the Episcopal Church, he delivers lectures upon table manners—in short, he is continually forgetting that the prime purpose of the romancer should be to please, not to instruct. Worst of all, he is not merely didactic, he is often absurd. Other great writers have been wrong-headed. Cooper is almost the only one who makes a fairly frequent practice of being obstreperously fatuous. Yet with all his many and serious faults of character and art he remains a very great man and writer. His strenuous nobility of soul, his splendid “sincerity and strength,” make him a figure of whom any country and race may be proud. As a large creative genius he is probably without a rival among American authors.

Cooper and Irving are not the only writers of fiction that require mention in this chapter, but they are the only ones that need elaborate treatment. A few short-story writers who were also poets will be discussed later; here we may remark that the excellence of Cooper's *Spy* can scarcely be better brought out than by setting it in juxtaposition with Samuel Woodworth's *Champions of Freedom* (1816), a story of the War of 1812. Woodworth (1785-1842), who is now known, if at all, only for his song "The Old Oaken Bucket," which makes up for its lack of poetical quality by its homely appeal, was the author of operas and of numerous sentimental, pietistic, and mildly humorous effusions in verse. Beginning as an apprentice to a New England editor, he continued to practise journalism in New York, his most successful undertaking being the establishment of the once famous weekly, the *Mirror* (1823), which, however, he soon turned over to his partner, George P. Morris (1802-64), another small though popular poet remembered for his ballad "Woodman, Spare that Tree." But we are not so much concerned with the slight successes of these minor Knickerbockers as with the light thrown by Woodworth's *Champions of Freedom* upon the status of literature in America shortly after the close of the second war with Great Britain. Fifteen years had elapsed since the last of Brockden Brown's novels had appeared, and Miss Austen, Miss Edgeworth, and the "Author of *Waverley*" stood ready to serve as models to any American who insisted upon getting his inspiration from abroad. But Woodworth preferred to model his story on chaos. His readers were treated now to a bald report of operations on sea or land, now to an account of a ball, now



to a description of the famous burning of the Richmond Theatre. But they were also regaled with attempted seductions and accomplished abductions, and with intermittent appearances of a "mysterious chief" who turned out to be the allegorized spirit of Washington. In other words, Woodworth, endeavouring to be original, mixed wild romance with crude realism. After the appearance of *The Spy* such literary monstrosities were much less likely to see the light.

The orderly work of Irving and Cooper came, however, too late to do good service to a richly endowed man a few years their junior. This was John Neal (1793-1876), a native of Maine, who after educating himself, teaching, selling "dry goods," and studying law, suddenly blossomed out as a poet and novelist of astonishing fecundity and great though untrained power. In 1823 he went to England, ostensibly to answer Sydney Smith's query of three years before, "Who reads an American book?" Neal managed to get several of his own articles on American literature and politics read in *Blackwood's*, and attracted the notice of Bentham, who made him one of his secretaries. In 1827 he returned to America, gave encouragement to the struggling Poe, became a journalist and social reformer, and lavished his energies in an almost titanic fashion. It was his boast that within twelve years he had written enough to fill fifty-five duodecimo volumes. He did not perceive that in this statement he was chiefly calling attention to the fact that even real ability struggles against great if not overwhelming odds when it is deprived of the restraints imposed by individual and collective culture. His books are now obtained with diffi-

culty, and are scarcely remembered even by title. The earlier ones astounded contemporary readers as much by their incoherence as by their almost fulminating power of a supra-Byronic type. *Logan* (1822) may be selected to represent his fiction. The implacable mysterious Indian chief, the deadly-tempered Harold, the inexplicable Elvira, act and talk like lunatics, and apparently infect their creator, whose surcharged style fairly explodes, especially in the closing scream against England. This book raises the question whether absurdity to the *nth* does not equal genius. Later, Neal quieted down, partly abandoned his masters Godwin and Byron, and in such sketches as *The Down Easters* (1833) dealt rather realistically with the ways of steamboat-passengers and similar topics. His poetry exhibits much the same qualities as his prose. It is marred by confusion resulting from almost unparalleled facility, yet leaves one with the impression that its author was a genius, however ill-regulated. There are good passages in the longer pieces and some of the lyrics make one regret the reckless squandering of what might have proved at least notable talents. Yet Neal's is certainly a picturesque and instructive career, which may be studied in an autobiography that does not belie its title—*Wandering Recollections of a Somewhat Busy Life* (1869).

It seems incongruous to set beside this Boanerges two decorous and exemplary New England women whose mild fiction once charmed the readers whom Neal puzzled or excited. Yet the first stories of Miss Catherine Maria Sedgwick (1789–1867) and Mrs. Lydia Maria Child (1802–80), both of Massachusetts, date from the early twenties, and illustrate the development of fiction during

our period. Both wrote voluminously for many years and represented in their lives and works the basic New England impulse to be "up and doing" something good for somebody else. Miss Sedgwick taught a girls' school for fifty years, wrote tales, novels, moral sketches, letters of travel, biographies of literary prodigies, contributions to annuals and magazines—in short, made the republic, or at least New England, her school-house and instructed her gawky pupil-public in a way beneficial to them but not enlivening to posterity. Her delineations of New England life were considered faithful, and even when she attempted to restore the past, as in *Hope Leslie* (1827), she did not suffer so much from comparison with Scott and Cooper as her stilted primness might at first blush warrant one in supposing. She is probably less remembered than Mrs. Child because the latter's philanthropy took an antislavery turn. Her *Appeal for that Class of Americans called Africans* (1833) was followed by numerous other appeals to the conscience of the nation, and she became one of the most effective, though not immodestly aggressive figures in the greatest of modern crusades. She also wrote in the interest of mothers and children, and attempted theological disquisitions beyond her powers. It is her fiction, however, that concerns us. Her first story entitled *Hobomok* (1821) dealt with life in Salem in 1629, and was amusingly amateurish; but it illustrated the growth of national, or at least sectional, self-consciousness. Her next book, *The Rebels; or, Boston before the Revolution*, if unduly patriotic, showed improvement. Her most ambitious piece of fiction appeared many years later. This was *Philothea* (1836), a romance of the days of Pericles,

which has at least the merit of comparative brevity. In spite of its stilted cant and of the fact that Mrs. Child, however carefully she had read up for her book, had probably as much insight into real Greek life as she would have had into that of Mars had her scene been laid in that planet, it proves her to have possessed sympathy with ideal beauty and an imagination of poetical quality. There is little power of characterization and pathos is overworked, but when one compares *Philothea* with the contemporary and much read story of New York life entitled *Norman Leslie*, by Theodore S. Fay, one has an excellent illustration of the fact that notoriety is a poor test of genuine merit. The ideal picture of Greek life, steeped in the purity of its author's soul, is worth a glance to-day; the fantastic picture of American life, with its faded colours and its faulty drawing, is fit only to serve as a sign on a danger-post.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter would not be complete without some reference to the curious story entitled "Peter Rugg, the Missing Man," which William Austin of Charlestown, Massachusetts, contributed to the *New England Galaxy* for 1827-28. This American variation of the legend of the Wandering Jew may have owed something to "Rip Van Winkle," and may, as critics have held, have influenced Hawthorne. It certainly owed a good deal to German romance. It was once popular and has survived its author's orations and other writings.



## CHAPTER XI

### WRITERS OF VERSE (1809-29)

THE closing year of our period saw the publication at Boston of the most elaborate anthology of American verse that had yet been attempted. These three volumes of *Specimens of American Poetry, with Critical and Biographical Notices* proved not merely that the Massachusetts town was almost equal to New York as a home of literary men, but that it was perhaps more enterprising than its rival as a centre of publication. They were projected by the well-known publisher and writer of juvenile fiction Samuel Griswold Goodrich (1793-1860), the "Peter Parley" of two generations ago, who with Jacob Abbott, author of the *Rollo Books*, and William Taylor Adams, known to children as "Oliver Optic," worthily continued in America the work begun by "the philanthropic bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard," John Newbery. Goodrich is more important to us as an encourager of native authors, especially Hawthorne, as the publisher of a long-lived annual, *The Token* (1828-42), to which these authors contributed, and as the writer of two volumes (*Recollections of a Lifetime*, 1856), which hold up a mirror to American life and literature of the first half of the nineteenth century. His services as an anthologist—

he wrote verses himself—are not so well remembered, yet it seems plain that he projected the *Specimens* mentioned above, secured the co-operation of critics, wrote some of the criticism, bought many of the rare books needed for citation, and lost fifteen hundred dollars for his pains. He did not edit the undertaking himself, but after it was partly under way turned it over to Samuel Kettell, under whose name it usually passes.

Kettell was a journalist, translator, and hack writer of some ability, who appears to have taught himself fourteen languages. He or Goodrich, or more probably both, drew upon about five hundred volumes or pamphlets of verse, and they were naturally most successful in discovering New England bards, whose ranks they recruited from newspaper versifiers and from college poets not out of their teens. The number of New York and Philadelphia writers inserted was, however, fairly large, and even the South was by no means neglected. The critical standards of these forerunners of Crépet and Mr. Humphry Ward appear to be vastly different from our own, but although errors of omission and commission may be discovered, there is little room to censure the editorial work on the score of zeal and thoroughness. Still less room is there for speaking of the compilation as "Goodrich's *Kettle* of Poetry," as contemporary wags used to do, for we are not now obliged to taste its contents in our capacity as readers.

As students we must be more or less grateful to Goodrich and Kettell. A careful analytical study of the materials so lavishly furnished would yield interesting results—would throw light, for example, on the growth of

romanticism; on the groping for American subjects, especially for such as would bring forward the fast-receding Indian; on the pathetic anxiety of friends to secure immortality for some promising youth whose career had been cut short; on the early development of newspaper verse; on the migratory habits of ambitious Americans; and on similar points. There is no occasion for such an analysis here, but it should be observed that the compilers devoted slightly over half their space to verse-writers who would naturally fall within the limits of this chapter. These bards number one hundred and twenty-five, of whom, it is safe to say, not more than one-fifth are known by name, even to persons who take a special interest in American literature. Leaving out a few names like those of Longfellow and Whittier, whose early verses did not seem so valueless to our anthologists as those of the youthful Poe apparently did, we find that only one poet of real importance emerges from this unillustrious group—William Cullen Bryant. A few of his compeers, such as Woodworth and Neal, were mentioned in the last chapter, a few others will be discussed after him, but it is obvious that he alone demands extended treatment. It is equally obvious that although there was no lack of writers determined to emulate the glory of Byron and Moore, or the less resplendent fame of Wordsworth and Coleridge, their achievements during the first quarter of the nineteenth century were inferior to those of their prose competitors.

The supremacy of Bryant over every other American poet who became prominent before 1825 was very soon apparent, and, as a national poet was sorely wanted, it is

no wonder that his limited though genuine powers were overrated. It is equally no wonder that in view of a long period of overvaluation, they are now on the whole undervalued. WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT was born at Cummington, Massachusetts, on November 3, 1794, the son of Dr. Peter Bryant, who, as a loyal physician and medical teacher, named his boy after the great Scotch professor of medicine William Cullen. From his father he derived his bent for poetry—it is amusing to observe how many of the family wrote verses; from his mother he inherited the sturdier Puritan virtues, visible alike in his character and in his writings. Perhaps he was more affected, however, by his environment, whether of primitive, God-fearing, liberty-loving country folk or of primeval hills and forests, which though less rugged to-day, have lost little of their impressive beauty. Indeed it is scarcely claiming too much to say that in few cases do the sources of a writer's genius seem so clearly indicated as in the case of Bryant. A moralist, dealing chiefly with death and the more sombre phases of life, a lover and interpreter of nature, a champion of democracy and human freedom, in each of these capacities he was destined to do effective service for his countrymen, and this work was, as it were, cut out for him in his youth, when he was labouring in the fields, attending corn-huskings and cabin-raising, or musing beside forest streams.

The boy's early training came mainly from his father, who developed along eighteenth-century lines his son's poetical precocity. Some of the verses thus encouraged were recited at school and were printed in a local news-



paper in 1807. They were followed by a satire on Jefferson's efforts to prevent war, *The Embargo; or, Sketches of the Times* (Boston, 1808). The next year this reached a second edition which contained, besides fresh poems, an advertisement certifying the author's extreme youth, about which doubts had been expressed. Macaulay had already written verses more remarkable, and the most curious feature of the whole transaction is that Dr. Bryant should have permitted his youthful prodigy to refer in a very unambiguous way to the alleged sexual irregularities of the then President of the United States. But the worthy physician was a violent Federalist, and probably thought that Satan's earthly representative, Thomas Jefferson, deserved to be judged out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. So he had the verses printed instead of flogging their author.

After some slight schooling Bryant, in 1810, entered Williams College. He did not remain long and was prevented through lack of means from removing to Yale, but he did the next best thing—that is to say, he read widely in English literature and also began the study of law. Fortunately we have a good account of his early reading, which throws some light on the culture of the well-to-do American families of the period. Pope's *Iliad* soon replaced Watts's "Hymns." Then followed Campbell's "Pleasures of Hope," Kirke White, Blair's "Grave," Bishop Porteus on "Death," Southey and Cowper, especially the latter's "Task." "The Faery Queene" was read through several times, nor did its charm apparently diminish the boy's relish for the best poetry his own country had to offer, that of Freneau. But

all former favourites yielded to the *Lyrical Ballads*, which Dr. Bryant, who was often away in Boston attending the Legislature, seems to have purchased in the Philadelphia reprint of 1802, and to have brought home to his eager children in 1810. We have abundant testimony with regard to the enthusiasm with which the young poet made the acquaintance of Wordsworth, but his earliest verses of note were composed under the influence of other masters. "Thanatopsis" was written in Bryant's seventeenth year, after autumn musings in the Cummington forests and also after much conning of Blair's "Grave" and probably of Kirke White's "Time." In its final form "Thanatopsis" marks the culmination of the poetry produced by what has been aptly denominated the Churchyard School,<sup>1</sup> and it is obviously fitting that this characteristic product of Anglo-Saxon morbidity should have reached the highest point of its evolution, not in Old but in New England before the entire collapse of Puritan orthodoxy. But although "Thanatopsis" was the product of a school, it was also marked by distinct originality. Its rhythm and diction, if derived partly from Cowper and the Bible, were Bryant's own, and its treatment of nature, if inspired by Wordsworth, was still more inspired by the forests and hills amid which the youthful American had been reared. To the hard self-reliance of the primitive life he led was perhaps due the stoical element of his

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<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, "Thanatopsis" seems to be the culmination of the sombre element in the effusions of the Churchyard School of Parnell, Blair, Porteus, Young, and the rest, just as Gray's "Elegy" seems to be the culmination of the pathetic, reflective, more or less sentimental element.

poem, which replaced the traditional theology. Be all this as it may, "Thanatopsis," even in its first draft, was a remarkable poem for any one to write, much more for a mere boy.

This fact was immediately recognised when the lines were published. Bryant had left Cummington to enter on his law studies, and had silently placed a copy of the verses amid some papers which his father afterward found. According to the usually received story, the physician was so much impressed on reading the poem that he sent it to *The North American Review*, which, in 1815, had been started upon its long career by a club of Boston young men who were anxious to emulate the success of the Scotch and English reviewers. One of its editors, Richard Henry Dana, later a warm friend of Bryant's, and himself a poet, doubted whether so good a poem could have been written by an American, and through some mistake was led to visit the State Senate in order that he might get a glimpse of its author. Tradition has it that he was not reassured upon scanning the features of estimable Dr. Bryant. Nevertheless "Thanatopsis" was accepted and appeared in the number for September, 1817, along with some other verses by its real author. Half a year later the *Review* published the strong, clear-cut stanzas "To a Water-Fowl," and Bryant was fairly launched as a poet.

His almost premature success seems to have diverted our poet from a not unpromising career at the bar. Before he left it, however, he made a most happy marriage, delivered a Phi Beta Kappa poem at Harvard—a clear proof of his local fame—and published a thin volume of verse (1821). This contained the Harvard poem, "The Ages,"

a serious and patriotic effusion, in thirty-five Spenserian stanzas of the "Childe Harold" type, distinguished rather for its manner than for its thought. More significant was "The Yellow Violet," written early and under Wordsworth's influence, yet worthy of the flower it celebrated. There were also other good nature poems such as the sweetly idyllic "Green River" and the Cowperesque "Winter Piece," marked by a spaciousness of atmosphere for which the insular poet was not responsible. More important still, perhaps, were the stately poems of solemn moralizing, such as the "Hymn to Death," which appropriately lamented the poet's father, and the amended "Thanatopsis," which gained a paragraph at both ends and was subjected to other changes, all or nearly all improvements. These stately poems are naturally cold—indeed Lowell was right enough in claiming that Bryant was like a never "ignified" iceberg—and as naturally not far from commonplace in substance; but they make a fairly universal appeal to Anglo-Saxons, who are rarely without their sober, not to say sombre moments, and they are not unsatisfactory to the æsthetic sense of readers who appreciate effective and somewhat individual blank verse. Bryant's blank verse, which he wrote about as well in his youth as in his trained old age, does not attain either sublimity or charm, but that it is on the whole effective and individual, especially in its internal sentence structure and in its frequency of full pauses, seems apparent from a comparison of his work in this measure with that of such poets as Thomson, Cowper, and Wordsworth, the last of whom may be presumed to have influenced but scarcely to have dominated him. Even should this claim fail of sub-



stantiation, Bryant cannot be denied the credit of having added to the literature of his race one of the most nobly dignified passages of blank verse that any poet has to offer. The close of "Thanatopsis" has not in its special kind been surpassed, but it must be added that, as this dates from his twenty-seventh year, he is not entitled to all the praise that has been showered upon him as a youthful prodigy. It is only fair also to subjoin the passage, which is better than any praise of it can possibly be:

So live, that when thy summons comes to join  
The innumerable caravan, which moves  
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take  
His chamber in the silent halls of death,  
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,  
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed  
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave  
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

During the years 1823-25, encouraged probably by the success of his volume, Bryant wrote some of his best poems, for example, "The Forest Hymn" and "The Lapse of Time," yet even success could not make him prolific. The total poetical product of his long life, exclusive of translations—the Spanish portion of which stimulated native culture—while not so scanty as that of Gray, is not copious enough to give his admirers a comfortable assurance of his greatness. So far, however, as pecuniary rewards were concerned, it does not appear that the young poet was much encouraged to rush into print, or that he valued his work highly. He was willing to write for *The United States Literary Gazette* of Boston at the rate of two dollars per poem, but the generous editor actually

paid him a little more. Such munificent compensation scarcely warranted his abandonment of the law and of rural life, but Bryant had gained some cordial admirers in New York who persuaded him in 1825 to remove to that city and assist in the establishment of a new magazine. This venture soon failed; the friends, however, were faithful. Among them were Gulian C. Verplanck (1786-1870), justly valued in his day as a critic and a Shakespearian scholar; the brilliant Robert C. Sands, and the still-remembered poet Fitz-Greene Halleck. Their society helped him to bridge over two trying years and gave him the support he needed when, in 1827, he obtained a temporary position on the *Evening Post*. This newspaper, founded the first year of the century, and already influential, was destined soon to pass under his control, and it would be interesting, did space permit, to enlarge on the good service it has since done for American literature and public life as well as on the remarkable way in which Bryant stamped his personality upon it.

The twenty years that followed the poet's removal to New York were not propitious to his art. They form a sort of middle period in his work in which he wrote few noteworthy poems and in which it is not hard to discover traces of a waning of inspiration. In his choice of themes he frequently showed that he was hunting for subjects, and there are even indications that he was occasionally tempted to imitate poets as alien to his temperament as Byron and Moore. Still such popular verses as the sentimental "Death of the Flowers," the romantic "Damsel of Peru," and the patriotic "Song of Marion's Men" belong to this period as well as the dignified

“The Past” and “Earth,” and the sweet, meditative stanzas “To a Fringed Gentian,” the latter group of poems illustrating well the peculiar bent of his genius. And if these twenty years had yielded only the famous lines on Truth and Error in “The Battle-Field” (1837), they would not have been spent in vain.

Truth crushed to earth, shall rise again ;  
Th’ eternal years of God are hers ;  
But Error, wounded, writhes in pain,  
And dies among his worshippers.

In this noble thought expressed in a sententious form we probably have the keynote to Bryant’s character as man, as poet, and as editor. He was sturdy, upright, patriotic, open to large impressions from nature, from history, and from democratic society; he was not mobile, brilliant, passionate, subtle—in a word, had few of the salient, attractive qualities that to the minds of many persons connote the only genius worthy of the name. His share of the true lyrical singing gift was but slight; he was not masterly in his use of prose; he was not, on the whole, a gracious, genial personality. When he travelled, as he often did after his first visit to Europe in 1834, he made little impression, save through his noble physical presence, on such persons as the Brownings, and received as little in return; he seems even to have regretted the absence of American features in the landscape of Italy. But with all his limitations, he was a genuine and admirable American product of whom contemporary countrymen might well be proud, especially after the collected poems of 1831, which were introduced to England by Irving the year following. That his volumes came out

only at intervals of about ten years, and that his prose efforts as seen in his letters from abroad and in his editorials were of only ephemeral interest, were matters of slight importance in view of the high tone of his poetry at its best and of the broad sympathy, trained intelligence, common sense, and patriotism that characterized him as editor and citizen. He opened the eyes of Americans to the beauties of their scenery, especially to its elements of grandeur and spaciousness; he aroused interest in the unfortunate aboriginal inhabitants of the continent; he described the rich prairies of the West and prophesied the wealth and power that would follow in the wake of the hardy pioneer; he opposed the spread of slavery and triumphed in the growth of democratic principles abroad; in a word, if he was not a true singer, he was not far from fulfilling adequately some of the noblest functions of the *vates*—the bard.

During the closing period of his life, which may be taken to lie between 1845 and the date of his death, June 12, 1878, Bryant gave himself some relaxation from his editorial labours and reaped the honours due to his well-spent life. Except for the death of his wife he had no reason to agree with Wordsworth that

We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;  
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

Although popular taste in poetry was changing, there was no diminution of his country's homage, some zealous souls actually proposing him for President when he was over eighty. He became an imposing national figure, and was especially looked to in New York for memorial addresses. It was immediately after delivering such an ad-



dress at the unveiling of a statue of Mazzini that he suffered the accident which led to his death. These facts are as important to the historian of American literature as they are to Bryant's biographer, for they furnish additional proof of the connection that has subsisted since the settlement of the continent between literary activity and that public, democratic spirit which makes for the greatest good of the greatest number. It was the ethical rather than the æsthetic value of Bryant's poetry that gave it currency among his countrymen; it is this combined with his historic importance that warrants both a serious and a sympathetic study and discussion of his poetry to-day. Yet, as we have already seen, it would be a mistake to suppose that Bryant's work in verse does not deserve moderate praise even from the most exigent of æsthetic critics, a fact which is rather strikingly brought out by his later poems. As a rule, it is on the poetry of his maturity rather than on that of his youth and his old age that a poet's reputation rests. This is not true of Bryant. His later poems, written when he was comparatively free from editorial cares, are often fully worthy to be set beside the remarkable creations of his youth, when he was inspired by his native woods and hills, to the seclusion of which, indeed, it was often his privilege to retire during his hearty old age. The *Thirty Poems* of 1864 proved conclusively that the man of seventy, even if he had not fulfilled the promise of the youth of sixteen, had at least regained some of the power which as a man of forty-five he seemed to have lost. In fact, from his fiftieth to his eighty-third year Bryant displayed a poetic energy which for him was rather remarkable. To this period belong the finely patriotic

"Oh, Mother of a Mighty Race"; the prophetic "Song of the Sower," a prototype of Timrod's "Cotton-Boll" and Lanier's "Corn"; the long and curious legend entitled "Sella," which has some of the coolness of water, just as "The Little People of the Snow," a real child's classic, has much of the cold purity of the winter scenes it describes; and the solemn and elevated "Flood of Years," a worthy pendant of "Thanatopsis." These by no means exhaust the excellent poems of the period, and if they do not enlarge our appreciation of Bryant's merits they surely strengthen it. A careful analysis will show, as is only natural, that these poems of old age, as compared with those of Bryant's youth, indicate that the tendency to moralize upon death and the more solemn aspects of life had grown upon him, but analysis of his entire work will also show that it is a mistake to represent Bryant as nearly always leading his unfortunate readers to an open grave over which he insists upon preaching a sermon. He is seldom a sentimental elegist, and by no means always a sombre moralist. He is oftener a true interpreter of nature and an inspiring poet of patriotism and of human freedom. It is a mistake also to insist upon the limitations rather than upon the many merits of his art. His diction, his command of blank verse, his knowledge and use of the general stock of stanzaic forms, place him, not among the masters, but at least among the more considerable poets of the language. He is not great, but he is not minor, and when to his original work is added his meritorious translation of Homer in blank verse, undertaken, like that of Cowper, as a solace against grief, we are fairly warranted in concluding that his place in American

literature is both secure and important. His place as a man and a citizen is still higher.

Bryant was only an adopted Knickerbocker, and, while New York had no native poet who could dispute his pre-eminence, it furnished him both with predecessors and with contemporary fellows in song. Only slightly his elder was the dramatist John Howard Payne (1792-1852), who published a volume of juvenile poems in 1813, four years after he had begun his precocious career as an actor in the rôle of Young Norval. Payne's earlier and later verses, his numerous dramas, and his roving, pathetic life would not have preserved his name, but his single song "Home, Sweet Home," from his worthless opera *Clari; or, The Maid of Milan* (1823), has given him an immortality which, however little deserved on purely literary grounds, it would be churlish to begrudge him. The work of James Kirk Paulding has been already noticed, but space may be found for a mention of his elaborate poem in couplets entitled "The Backwoodsman" (1818), which may be taken, along with "The Foresters" of the ornithologist Alexander Wilson (1766-1813), as proof that Cooper was by no means the first writer to perceive the importance to American authors of the literary material furnished by the pioneer and by the growing West.

But the chief Knickerbocker verse-writers prior to Bryant's advent were two friends whose names are as closely linked in death as they were in life. These were Fitz-Greene Halleck (1790-1867) and the shorter-lived Joseph Rodman Drake (1795-1820). Halleck was born in Guildford, Connecticut, where he served as a clerk for six years before trying his fortunes in New York.

Through the steadiness of his habits and the friendship of his last employer, John Jacob Astor, he finally secured a retirement which could scarcely have been supported on the proceeds of his poetry. Shortly after his removal to New York he met Drake, who had been born there, and the two formed a friendship which was soon to be broken by the younger man's premature death. Shortly before the latter event they treated the town to a literary sensation which rivalled and probably surpassed that caused by the appearance of *Salmagundi*. They began in the *Evening Post* the publication of a series of clever satires in verse upon local celebrities, such as the omniscient Dr. Mitchill and sundry Tammany worthies. These squibs were known as "The Croaker Papers" (1819), an unwarrantably lugubrious and curiously prophetic title. A few serious poems of the authors are deservedly better known. Drake, who was a physician, left behind him some manuscript verses which were published by his daughter in 1835 under the title of *The Culprit Fay and Other Poems*. They won recognition, and the title piece has been usually regarded as one of the few productions of consequence to be found in early American poetry. It was distinctly a youthful performance, having been written in 1816, and it clearly proved that its author possessed precocious talents. Yet to speak of him almost as one does of Keats seems little short of ridiculous. The poem displayed a power of description and a range of fancy hardly to be looked for then in America, and, if metrically it owed much to contemporary English poets, it derived its main inspiration apparently from standard literature, on which Drake had a clear right to draw. But it seems much too



spun out and to some readers at least suggests throughout facility rather than mastery. Drake's shorter poems are few in number and imitative in manner, but they show a commendable effort to discover local themes worthy of treatment, and in one instance the young poet struck the hearts of his countrymen. The song entitled "The American Flag" may not as poetry deserve its reputation with the masses any more than "The Culprit Fay" does with readers of more exigent taste, but the patriotism and grandiloquent rhetoric of the lyric are not without appealing qualities.

Halleck lamented the death of his friend in a simple elegy that in its kind has probably not been surpassed in the literature they both strove to advance. It is perfect in feeling, although not in diction, and its opening stanza at least is very widely known:

Green be the turf above thee,  
Friend of my better days !  
None knew thee but to love thee,  
Nor named thee but to praise.

Although he wrote several other good lyrics, Halleck never equalled these lines. His spirited, though perhaps overlong "Marco Bozzaris" appeared in 1827, together with the verses on "Burns" and on "Alnwick Castle," in a volume which took its title from the last-named poem. Other editions of this volume and of his collected poems did not prove him to be much more than an occasional poet with a thin, though genuine, lyric vein and a considerable capacity for pleasant society verse. He had shown his ability in the latter respect as early as 1819, when he published his mild *Fanny*, which followed "Beppo"

and "Don Juan" at a farther distance perhaps than "Red Jacket" and other lyrics did corresponding poems of Byron's. Yet although "Fanny" does not delight us as it did our grandfathers, it would be unfair not to point out the fact that Halleck was writing easy social verses, full of point and of good cadences, contemporaneously with Praed. In this species of composition he probably gave lessons to his countrymen Willis and Saxe, and when all is said, he deserves to be remembered with some gratitude and to be mentioned without excessive insistence upon his limitations.

No other New Yorker demands notice here save Bryant's friend Robert Charles Sands (1799-1832), whose early death was deplored much as that of Drake had been. Sands possessed rather remarkable talents, and in his versatility and scholarly energy illustrated that faculty of acquisitiveness which has characterized so many Americans in so many fields of achievement. He became learned in the law, wrote biographies of Cortez and of Paul Jones, tried his hand on sundry poems and short stories, edited magazines, annuals, and a newspaper, and last but not least perpetrated upon the staid readers of New York several literary pranks not unworthy of "Father Prout." There is no room to doubt his ability, and equally little room to doubt the deleterious effects exerted upon him and other contemporaries by the narrow, provincial, and, in the realm of ideas, rather chaotic life to which he was confined. Modern readers need scarcely trouble themselves to glance at his "Yamoyden," a romantic poem on King Philip's War, written in collaboration with a friend, although the portion entitled "To the Manito of Dreams,"

while imitative of Byron, shows considerable poetic fluency for a mere youth. Sands's minor verses are of fair merit, but his best work is to be found in his short stories. One of these, "A Simple Tale," which deals amusingly with the effects of village gossip, looks back to Irving and is almost worthy of him. Others are more interesting to the student as being premonitory of the work of Hawthorne and Poe. But perhaps the greatest service Sands rendered his readers is to be found in his spun-out and jejune *Scenes at Washington*, for it was important that a native American, not a foreigner, should teach the self-conscious people of the United States to laugh at the oddities of their life, especially as illustrated by their politicians at the national capital.

Meanwhile the New England which Bryant and Halleck had abandoned was preparing for the great literary development of the decades between 1840 and 1860, but on the whole gave comparatively little evidence of progress and promise in its poetry. The immediate successors of Robert Treat Paine followed, however, better masters than that wayward poet did, even if their work is scarcely if at all more memorable in the main than his. The same thing is true of the group of Connecticut verse-writers who inherited the laurels of the Hartford Wits. Chief among the Massachusetts poets was Richard Henry Dana, Sr. (1787-1879), who must not be confused with his son and namesake (1815-82), author of the well-known *Two Years before the Mast* (1840) and a competent writer on international law. The elder Dana added distinction to a noted family more perhaps by the dignity of his character and by his culture than by his writings in

prose and verse, although these are not without value. We have already noticed his friendship with Bryant and his connection with *The North American Review*, to which he contributed some critical essays. He next published, with co-operation, a miscellany entitled *The Idle Man* (1821-22), then in 1827 brought out a volume of verse which was received with some favour. Twenty-three years later he issued his "Works," in two volumes, and for the rest of his long life lived in retirement. At first thought his scant productivity and the unattractive character of his writings seem to render his high position among his contemporaries explicable only on the score of their intellectual callowness, but such a view would be unjust both to him and to them. His critical essays, although old-fashioned, have considerable power and are free from the colonial spirit of servility. They meant much to American literature in its formative stages, and so did Dana's knowledge of the older British poets and his lectures on Shakespeare delivered in the chief cities. Compared with Coleridge he sinks into insignificance, but compared with Robert Treat Paine he fairly towers, so far at least as concerns influence for good. Less praise must be given his original work. His chief poem, "The Buccaneer," was praised by Wilson in *Blackwood's*, and has been more or less well spoken of in America, but to blend a Coleridgean theme with a Wordsworthian style is a difficult undertaking, and Dana's effort, while not lacking in strength, is unconvincing and disappointing. Still the story of the bold bad sailor and the phantom steed will probably be found more attractive by venturous readers than Dana's meditative and nature poems, which owe a good deal to



Cowper and Wordsworth, and rarely rise above a moderate level of excellence. His attempts at fiction are still less to be recommended. He was really an essayist, and had almost no conception of the art of construction. Yet one should take leave of Dana with respect, and in order to do so should emphasize his services as a critic and a man of culture.

With Dana is naturally associated his brother-in-law, the painter Washington Allston (1779-1843), for the latter, although born in South Carolina, spent most of his life either abroad or in New England. Allston enjoyed the friendship of Coleridge, who was doubtless right in the high opinion he formed of the American's character and general powers. The painter-poet's verses, however, while above the level of contemporary American poetry and perhaps usefully influential through their careful technique, seem scarcely worthy of the favour they once enjoyed. His "Sylphs of the Seasons," which appeared with other poems in London and Boston in 1813, is a pretty and fanciful development of a very old theme—the contention of the seasons—and is to be credited in point of style to the later eighteenth rather than to the early nineteenth century. A similar judgment must be passed upon nearly all the other poems of the thin volume. In the posthumous verses, published along with some lectures on art, it is easy to see the influence of the English romantic poets. None of the later poems is notable unless it be the fine-spirited "America to Great Britain," which with all its Campbell cadences was printed in the first edition of Coleridge's *Sibylline Leaves*. Some of the lyrics are pretty, but the sonnets are faulty in construction, Allston's resi-

dence in Italy not having stood him in much better stead in this regard than in his ineffective romance *Monaldi* (1841).

The other Massachusetts verse-writers are easily disposed of in spite of their rather formidable numbers. Many of Kettell's candidates for fame are hopelessly dead. Others, such as Charles Sprague (1791-1875) and Maria Gowen Brooks (1795 *circa*-1845), demand but a word. Sprague attracted attention by prize prologues, a prize ode on Shakespeare, and a Phi Beta Kappa poem on "Curiosity." He also touched many readers by such appeals to domestic sentiment as "The Family Meeting" and "I see thee still," an elegy on his sister. He showed sincerity and metrical skill, but his reputation, although not entirely undeserved, was chiefly due to the comparative darkness of the poetical heavens at the time his mild light appeared. Mrs. Brooks was much more completely a child of her times. She was well educated, and at first lived in affluence, but after an early marriage was reduced to comparative poverty and took to poetry for a consolation. Her most notable work, *Zophiël; or, The Bride of Seven* (1833), was begun in Cuba in her widowhood, and the first canto was published at Boston in 1825. She then travelled and finished her poem at Keswick under the benign encouragement of Southey, who dubbed her "Maria del Occidente," and declared her to be "the most impassioned and imaginative of all poetesses." Posterity has not agreed with him in ranking her above Sappho, and prefers to read of the love of angels for women in the pages of Moore or of Byron. That her romanticism had more than a mere touch of power need not be denied, but

her native country was better prepared to appreciate the domestic strains of Mrs. Sigourney (1791-1865).

This exemplary woman, the most popular of the Connecticut bards, or indeed of contemporary American writers, was born as Lydia Huntley. In 1815 she published under the patronage of a well-meaning friend a volume entitled *Moral Pieces in Prose and Verse*, which certainly justified its appellation. A more innocuous book has never issued from the press. Four years later she married, but domestic cares did not prevent her from continuing her literary career, of which she gave an instructive account in her naïve *Letters of Life*, published posthumously in 1866. She could compose while knitting socks for her family, and it is to be hoped that her knitting was as even as the flow of her verse. It was an era of ephemeral annuals, magazines, and newspapers, whose editors were continually soliciting contributions which she was too kind-hearted to refuse. It was also a period of adoring admirers of sentimentality and piosity, who besought their favourite poetess to write them bridal songs and elegies. In response she wrote over two thousand poems and articles, which in their collected form make the modern reader shiver as he contemplates them. To the student Mrs. Sigourney must always remain a phenomenon rather than an author. Ballads, elegies, descriptive poems, flowed from her with a placid copiousness that has rarely been paralleled. She was equal to the task of composing five cantos in blank verse upon the "Traits of the Aborigines of America," but, after all, she was more in her element when apostrophizing sick children and absent pastors. Yet she was a sweet, pure

woman who should scarcely be criticised, so wide-spread and excellent was her influence. And when at her best, as in such a piece as "Indian Names," she was more effective than some of her masculine competitors.

Chief among the latter was the now almost unread James Gates Percival (1795-1856), also of Connecticut. Morbid rather than sentimental, he early essayed heroic poetry and tragedy, and also taught school and studied medicine. Although always rather shiftless in practical matters, he displayed immense energy in literature, scholarship, and scientific studies, especially in geology. Yet, though omniscience was his foible, poetry was his forte, and he showed rancour when other poets were preferred to him. His persistent egoism, his romantic aloofness, his reputed unorthodoxy, and the copious ebullieny with which at first he poured forth his verses did indeed win him a fair reputation, which was at last cruelly snuffed out by an article of Lowell's. There is no need to discuss or catalogue his publications, which, beginning in 1820, include a long poem entitled "Prometheus" and lyrical effusions on almost every conceivable subject in almost every known metrical form. He imitated Byron, Moore, Shelley, Wordsworth, and the Minnesingers; he wrote "Classic Melodies" and "Songs for National Airs." This is merely to say that Percival ransacked the universe for subjects, which he treated with a facility that suggests improvisation rather than poetic art. The self-consciousness of youthful America culminated in him, without the saving touches of humour and practicality. Yet amid his countless stanzas, especially in his last volume, *The Dream of a Day* (1843), many good and a few



really beautiful things could be found by any anthologist capable of resisting the torpor that naturally attends the perusal of copious verse. Indeed, one short poem, "To Seneca Lake," has already won for itself a place in the memories of many people.

Fully as serious, but not so morbid a poet as Percival was another Connecticut writer, James Abraham Hillhouse (1789-1841), who is now deservedly little read, but whose conscientious labours for his country's literature demand a word. With some unimportant exceptions, his work was dramatic, although in his two volumes of 1839 some orations are to be found that are interesting to the minute student of American culture. Of his plays one need remember only the sacred drama *Hadad* (1825) on which contemporary admirers, like Bryant, founded their belief in Hillhouse's genius. This was another attempt to utilize the theme expressed in Coleridge's line

By woman wailing for her demon lover.

In Hillhouse's case, however, the disguised demon, Hadad, wailed for Tamar, the daughter of Absalom. In the Hebrew setting of the play we obviously have a survival of the spirit of Timothy Dwight, but the later author in his versification and diction made a great advance over his eighteenth-century predecessor. Some of the elaborate speeches fail scarcely if at all of being poetry of a true and dignified kind. But Hillhouse's imagination overreached itself. Human interest was sacrificed, especially at the close of the play, and the brave experiment remained a failure. More interesting than Hillhouse is John Pierpont (1785-1866), who was also born in Connecticut and in the course

of his long life was a teacher, a lawyer, a merchant-partner of John Neal, a clergyman, a temperance and anti-slavery advocate, an army chaplain, and finally a clerk in the Treasury Department at Washington. Such a career scarcely yielded time for much cultivation of the art of poetry, yet Pierpont left behind him a volume of verses that will compare very favourably with the work of most of his contemporaries. His longest poem, "Airs of Palestine" (1816), was reissued in 1840 along with numerous occasional pieces. In such stanzas as those on his son's death, beginning "I cannot make him dead," Pierpont showed himself to be a true poet. The elaborate "Airs of Palestine" in style and matter alike also gave evidence of its author's real talents, but its chief importance to the student lies in the fact that it is so clearly the product of a transitional period. If it had been written in England it would probably have been called "The Pleasures of Music," and Pierpont would have been credited to the school of Campbell and Rogers. Being a pupil of Dwight's, he magnified appropriately the Hebraic element, but the influence of new ideas was plainly manifest in the pages he devoted to the praise of the Jesuits of Paraguay and in those he borrowed from Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme*. Culture, which is visible throughout Pierpont's work, was slowly disintegrating Calvinism in its extreme forms.

A disintegrating process was also going on at the South during this period, but in the sphere of politics rather than in that of religion. With Monroe the old line of Virginian statesmen came to an end; the question of slavery was pushed to the front; plantation life, which although inimical to the production of literature, had not precluded

culture, became less idyllic; and the section bent all its energies to the preservation of an institution for the destruction of which the fiat of civilization had gone forth. Even by 1820 a few far-sighted men like John Randolph and his half-brother Judge Beverley Tucker, author of a curiously prophetic story of disunion entitled *The Partisan Leader* (1836), had foreseen the trend events must take, but, in the main, intelligent Southerners concerned themselves with current politics and the practice of law, and when they wrote at all did so as amateurs. During the twenty years 1809-29 they produced scarcely a prose work of any consequence save a few local histories and the volumes already credited to William Wirt. In poetry they did better, but the record is a scanty one. Leaving to one side the early work of Poe we find that not more than a dozen writers of verse are at all remembered even by students, and that of these only two require brief notice. Francis Scott Key of Maryland (1780-1843), after seeing that the British in their attack on Baltimore in 1814 had not forced the lowering of the flag on Fort McHenry, wrote a patriotic lyric, "The Star-Spangled Banner," which has ever since been popular with his easily pleased countrymen. Key's other poems possess slight merit and do not make us regret the sterility of his muse. Lovers of poetry must always regret, however, that death soon silenced the voice of another Marylander, the best of the Southern poets before Poe, Edward Coate Pinkney (1802-28), the brilliant son of a brilliant father, William Pinkney, orator and diplomatist. This poet's career, which need not be detailed, was in a way romantic enough to explain the character of his poetry, if the influence of

Byron did not suffice. Whether with his temperament he would ever have fulfilled the promise of his poetical youth is a question no one can answer. But although it is easy to overpraise his poetry, which, as a whole, is juvenile and imitative, it is not easy to select from the poets of America a truer singer, in the narrower yet perhaps more charming sense of the term, than the talented youth who concluded his "Serenade" with the lines:

Nay, lady, from thy slumbers break,  
And make this darkness gay,  
With looks, whose brightness well might make,  
Of darker nights a day.

Most of Pinkney's admirers, however, would probably prefer to rest his claim to immortality upon his often-repeated poem "A Health," the first and third stanzas of which will suffice to indicate its quality:

I fill this cup to one made up of loveliness alone,  
A woman, of her gentle sex the seeming paragon ;  
To whom the better elements and kindly stars have given  
A form so fair, that, like the air, 'tis less of earth than heaven.

Affections are as thoughts to her, the measures of her hours;  
Her feelings have the fragrancy, the freshness of young flowers ;  
And lovely passions, changing oft, so fill her, she appears  
The image of themselves by turns—the idol of past years!

The new West offers nothing to detain us either in verse or prose save the interesting *Recollections of Ten Years passed in the Valley of the Mississippi* (1826) of the Rev. Timothy Flint (1780–1840). This writer, who among his numerous volumes counts one of the earliest romances dealing with Mexico, *Francis Berrian*, was, however, a New Englander by birth, a fact which reminds us



that as yet the West's great men of action and thought—its Andrew Jackson, its Henry Clay—must come to it from the older East. But Abraham Lincoln is already born, and even by 1829 we find an annual published at Cincinnati, the entire contents of which were supplied by Western writers. Verily it was an age and country of marvellous energy and vitality, even if it was also an age and country of sentimental effusiveness, of provincial sensitiveness, and of high-flying assertiveness. And it was an age and country that had produced books of solid worth or else of temporary utility, which, although they lie outside the limits of literature proper, ought not to be passed over completely. Charles Jared Ingersoll's *Inchiquin, the Jesuit's Letters* (1810), gave a not ineffective reply to the absurd strictures of foreign travellers. Henry Wheaton began his notable writings on international law. Joseph E. Worcester commenced his work in lexicography. Edward Everett and Daniel Webster entered on their careers as orators. James Kent wrote his *Commentaries on American Law*. Henry R. Schoolcraft did pioneer work in ethnology and the Rev. Jared Sparks in history. George Ticknor during this period led Americans to seek inspiration from German scholarship, although his own *History of Spanish Literature* was not published until 1849. John James Audubon issued the prospectus of *The Birds of America* in 1827. Last, but not least, the magazines and newspapers of the country had made a fair start upon their unparalleled career of development, even though hundreds of them had been founded only to die. In 1818 *The American Journal of Science* was established by Benjamin Silliman. Nine years later *The American Quar-*

*terly Review* of Philadelphia began its ten years' rivalry of *The North American Review* of Boston. A year later, at Charleston, a group of enterprising men, determined that the South should not be outdone, inaugurated *The Southern Review*, which, although it ran for only four years, proved conclusively that in no part of America was there a dearth of sound sense and information and, what was better still, of patriotic resolve to make all the intelligence of the country count in its mental and spiritual uplifting. Yet striking as was the amount of journalistic and literary activity displayed during the period, it might be plausibly argued that the general culture of the people was as much, if not more, advanced by the campaign speeches, the sermons, the patriotic orations that never lacked enthusiastic hearers, whether or not they now irritate or amuse the sophisticated reader. In the history of culture orations such as those which Daniel Webster and Edward Everett delivered in memory of Adams and Jefferson are of far more importance than they are in the history of literature.

## PART IV

### THE SECTIONAL PERIOD (1830-1865)

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#### CHAPTER XII

##### UNITARIANISM AND TRANSCENDENTALISM—THEIR ORIGINS AND EXPONENTS

THE decline in literary importance of theology and theologians after the close of the Colonial Period was not due to any paucity of able and devout American divines or to any wide-spread falling away from orthodox Christianity on the part of the American people taken as a whole. It was due rather to the marked change of direction in the channel taken by the stream of American literary energy. During and immediately after the Revolution this energy was exerted in the main upon political and utilitarian themes. With the opening of the nineteenth century, however, the "literature of power," to use De Quincey's convenient phrases, began to rival in importance the "literature of knowledge." At the inception of the period to which we are now come this effort to establish a genuine creative literature unites with certain contemporaneous efforts to spiritualize and liberalize still further an already liberal theology, and we have as results the greatest spiritual movement and the greatest body of literature yet produced in American history. These, it is almost needless to say, are the so-called tran-

scendental movement, synchronous with and finally merging into the political movement for the abolition of slavery, and what may perhaps be most adequately termed the Literature of the New England Prime. No satisfactory account of this movement or of this literature need be expected until the lapse of at least two additional generations affords the vantage-ground necessary for impartial study; yet to deal with the chief New England writers without inquiring at some length into the conditions under which they did their work would be manifestly futile.

Although, like the other sections of the country, New England could not emerge from such a struggle as the Revolution without undergoing changes of character, it seems clear that these changes, while sometimes important, as in the case of the Boston aristocracy, were on the whole not so marked as they were elsewhere. After its early stages the war was practically confined to the Middle and Southern States; in consequence there were fewer social disturbances in New England and there was less financial unsteadiness. The region had its Tories, and Massachusetts later had its uprising of debtors and ne'er-do-wells known as Shays' Rebellion, but the centres of confiscation, repudiation, and the other ills attendant upon a war partly civil in character lay farther to the East and to the South. In the democratic struggles against entrenched aristocracy, especially in matters ecclesiastical, it was the planters of Virginia that suffered the greatest reverses, not the well-to-do merchants and the sturdy farmers of Massachusetts and Connecticut. The pious and vastly learned Rev. Ezra Stiles (1727-95), almost a Cotton Mather in his literary voluminosity, wielded far more influence at



Yale College than the Episcopal bishop James Madison could have done at William and Mary, even had the Virginian possessed an equal energy of voice and pen. We have already seen how "Pope" Dwight succeeded Dr. Stiles and became almost an Innocent III to New England infidels and Jacobins. There were some of these, for not even Connecticut itself could shut out from its pious borders the influences of the French Revolution; but it was in the South and the new West that Jacobinic and democratic principles were most loudly professed.

New England was essentially conservative, as she proved by adhering to the Federalists under Hamilton and by looking upon the defeat of John Adams by Jefferson as a second Fall of Man. In matters of church and state, of social classes, of industries and modes of life, the erstwhile Puritan commonwealths were English in their warp and woof. They formed an outlying section, and attracted few immigrants in comparison with the emigrants they sent out. Although Jeffersonian democracy made some headway among them, the New Englanders were in the main cut off from political power during the administrations of the Virginian Presidents. Some of their leaders cherished premature and unjustified schemes for disunion, and their allegiance as a people was sorely strained while the War of 1812 was in progress. They saw with regret the boundaries of the republic enlarged through the purchase of Louisiana, and the decline of their shipping during the broils with Great Britain and France filled them with still direr apprehensions. But although New Englanders had grown less fanatical in religious matters, more appreciative and acquisitive of this world's goods,

more isolated in politics, and in many other respects less important as factors in the development of the republic, they had lost little, if anything, of their basal virtues of piety, thrift, and energy. When their ships and wharves began to rot, they turned to building factories, and thus, through the demand for operatives, stemmed the tide of Westward emigration. They grew richer instead of poorer, and instead of sulkily cherishing their political discontent, they inaugurated new phases of journalistic and literary activity, turned their attention to philanthropical reforms, and interested themselves once more in religious controversies. Thus it came to pass that when Jackson was elected President, in 1828, New England was inhabited by a compact, homogeneous, virtuous, intelligent, enterprising population, interested in their own affairs and somewhat disdainful of outside "barbarians." There was here no exact counterpart of Athens or Florence, but conditions that in each of those communities had superinduced a great creative period of mental activity were here sufficiently present to make it possible that any spiritual enkindling would culminate in a somewhat similar period.

We have already seen that during the reign of the Mathers Puritan orthodoxy became less strenuous, and that New England life in general was distinctly secularized. The second generation of the eighteenth century witnessed the religious revival known as the Great Awakening, and saw in Jonathan Edwards the most philosophical expounder of Calvinism that had yet appeared. But although Edwards could develop Calvinistic doctrine, neither he nor Whitefield nor any other of the moving

preachers of the times could bring back the golden age of theocracy—could make religion the centre and circumference of the lives of all thinking men. By 1744 the revival had spent its force, to the delight of such controversialists as the indefatigable Charles Chauncy; and Edwards at the end of his life was engaged, not in exhorting souls, but in endeavouring to check the inroads of Arminianism. Within a few years after his death dissensions began with the mother-country and political questions soon dominated the minds of men, as indeed they still dominate the minds of historians of the period. But although even the preachers throughout the country seemed to have turned politicians, theological controversies did not cease, nor could public turmoils check the labours of zealous Baptists, Methodists, and Quakers, especially in the Middle and Southern States, or prevent the New England mind from devoting itself assiduously to theological speculations. Jonathan Mayhew, whom we have already considered as a patriot preacher, had before Edwards's death boldly expressed views with regard to the nature of Christ that amounted to what is technically known as High Arianism, and had thus enrolled himself as a pioneer in the long line of liberal New England theologians that perhaps culminates in Theodore Parker.

Mayhew's father and two or three other clergymen had already by their publications aroused the suspicions and the wrath of their orthodox brethren, some of whom had replied in vehement pamphlets. The heterodox divines seem to have been affected by the arguments of the British deists and to have represented Arminian and Arian modes of thought that had become fashionable among

British dissenters and not unknown among adherents of the Establishment. Whiston, Samuel Clarke, and John Taylor are usually cited as the authorities on whom they chiefly relied, and there is evidence that the views of these now little-read Englishmen were familiar and acceptable to both clergymen and laymen in eastern Massachusetts within twenty years after the close of the Great Awakening. These liberal Americans, who must have been encouraged in their theological independence by the political radicalism of the times, were the progenitors of the Unitarians who during the first half of the nineteenth century dominated Boston and the adjacent region. They had in the main but slight affiliations with the harder, more definite Unitarianism represented by Priestley and his followers.

The Calvinism which Edwards had developed and defended was not, however, driven from the field. It was upheld with much power by his own son and namesake; by Joseph Bellamy, a noted preacher and trainer of clergymen; by Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), who evolved out of his master's writings a "Hopkinsian theology"; and later by Nathanael Emmons and the famous Timothy Dwight. These able men and their coadjutors practically held for orthodoxy the whole of New England outside of the Boston region, although in Connecticut some Arminians found a refuge in the Episcopal Church. They had not only the High Arians or Liberals to oppose, but also the newly risen Universalists, and in consequence they were obliged to discuss the "means of grace" with a pertinacity and a subtlety that astound the modern student as much as they weary him. While the means were being dis-



cussed, the grace itself was not specially in evidence, but it is worth noting that a region propitious to such discussion would in due time surely become propitious to the teaching of transcendental schemes of regeneration; and it is certainly permissible to admire the stability of the stern Calvinistic system that stood its ground during a period when political allegiance was being shifted and when utilitarian, deistic, and Jacobinic principles were securing converts on every hand.

It is usual to make the year 1785 mark the formal beginnings of New England Unitarianism. King's Chapel, Boston, the oldest Episcopal Church in the Eastern States, had lost its rector during the Revolution, and after peace was restored desired to supply his place with a young Mr. James Freeman, who had not been ordained. Freeman and his congregation found, however, that the Anglican liturgy was too strongly Trinitarian, and in the year above mentioned they altered it with the help of William Hazlitt, father of the celebrated essayist. A slight controversy ensued, especially as, failing to secure an episcopal ordination, the young man satisfied himself with one administered by his wardens and parishioners. Yet, bold as this step was, it appears to have aroused little that savoured of proscription on the part of the orthodox or of propagandism on the part of the heterodox. This fact seems to indicate both that Arian beliefs were widely held and that the religion of Boston at the time had its strongest roots in tradition rather than in the vital spiritual needs of the exemplary citizens. Doubtless if Freeman had indulged in controversial sermons his path might not have been so lined with roses; but thirty years were to elapse before

the term Unitarian was to be definitely fastened upon the revolvers from Calvinism, and before fellowship with Congregationalists was to be irrevocably denied them. Perhaps a longer period might have been required for this result had not the decades from 1790 to 1810 been marked by revivals and by an increase of missionary fervour. The followers of Edwards began to invade eastern Massachusetts, ministers suspected of antitrinitarian leanings were refused installation, and churches were divided. Meanwhile the Arian-Unitarians showed an astonishing reserve, looked askance at the doctrines and followers of Priestley, accepted miracles and other supernatural features of Christianity, and vied with their orthodox opponents in satisfying the social and spiritual needs of their congregations. That they were good and able men, if unduly secretive with regard to their theological convictions, seems manifest from the steady growth of their theological influence. In 1805, exactly twenty years after the adoption of the King's Chapel liturgy, Henry Ware, whose antitrinitarian views were unconcealed, was elected Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard, and within three years the orthodox Congregationalists, driven from the university they had looked upon as the nursery of their preachers, had been compelled to found Andover Seminary. Unitarianism was triumphant although not yet willing to hoist a distinctive flag; but the triumph was dearly bought. Lifelong friends could not, indeed, forego earthly communion, but felt sure that a few years would bring an eternal separation; and even fathers and sons preached from opposing pulpits a gospel which to the paternal heart at least conveyed a message of despair.

The religious unrest that filled New England minds at the beginning of the nineteenth century is well brought out by the letters that passed between the Rev. Joseph Buckminster (1751-1812), an eloquent Congregational clergyman of New Hampshire, and his able son, the Rev. Joseph Stevens Buckminster (1784-1812), a still more eloquent clergyman of Boston. The father preached the ordination sermon of the son, who had been called at an early age to take charge of the widely known Brattle Street Society. He started the young man upon his brilliant career in a sorrowfully foreboding charge, having previously done all in his power to prevent one who denied the equality of the Second Person with the First from spreading his heresy. The Unitarian was, however, made of the same stuff as the Calvinist. He wrote to his father with all the respect that New England life then inculcated, but his wide and deep reading had carried him away from Edwards and towards Priestley—and he would not flinch from the consequences. Yet he believed in Christianity as he understood it, and thought it his duty to accept the call to Brattle Street, though he saw no reason why he should proclaim his Unitarianism or preach doctrinal sermons. Instead, he preached with a power that earned him the rather absurd sobriquet of “the Chrysostom of America” sermons of great spirituality and practicality. Their style now seems more remarkable than their matter—is, in fact, good enough partly to explain the great reputation left by this sufferer from epilepsy, who died at the age of twenty-eight. The contemporaneous reputation of Robert Treat Paine as a poet is almost unintelligible; the reputation of Buckminster,

which perhaps is not yet extinct, is explicable both on account of an eloquence that was of service to Daniel Webster and on account of civic and pastoral qualities that were later seen in fuller development in William Ellery Channing the elder, and to some extent in Emerson himself. For from the days of Buckminster to those of Edward Everett Hale, Boston has never lacked Unitarian clergymen who have not merely guided their flocks in spiritual matters, but have stood forth as pioneers in literary and political and philanthropical movements—in short, as leading citizens in the true, not in the stereotyped sense of the phrase. Buckminster came too early, was a light in too provincial a town to exert the wide influence wielded later by Channing and James Freeman Clarke, but he would probably have rivalled the former had he lived. In many respects he reminds one of the great Calvinists of the seventeenth century; it is at least certain that he was the forerunner of Unitarians in the nineteenth well worthy to stand beside those giants of the older dispensation who would have persecuted their apostate successors with such good grace had opportunity arisen.

Among these Unitarians WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING stands pre-eminent. Born at Newport, Rhode Island, in 1780, he soon came under the influence of Edwards's pupil Samuel Hopkins. Later at Harvard this influence was somewhat counteracted by his reading, and a two years' residence as tutor in Virginia broadened his mind, while filling it with a horror of slavery. His exquisitely sensitive nature made the speculations of contemporary British radicals attractive to him; but he soon found his vocation in the ministry, where he hovered between a ra-



tional and a mystical theology. From 1803 until his death. October 2, 1842, he preached to his Federal Street congregation sermons remarkable for their clearness, their piety, and their eloquence—discourses which in numerous editions won him admirers throughout and outside New England. They might still win him admirers with little loss to a complacent generation, nor would their heterodoxy now attract attention. Channing was indeed a liberal who over and over again censured the narrowness of Calvinism; but as long as he could he avoided calling himself a Unitarian, and he consistently emphasized the vital rather than the doctrinal features of Christianity. Herein he was but acting in accord with Buckminster and other friends of the "Anthology Club," with whom he laboured for the upbuilding of an indigenous culture. But although in 1812 a reputable Boston clergyman, the Rev. Francis Parkman, could honestly minimize the heterodoxy of his brethren in a way that seemed almost disingenuous to many persons, such an anomalous lack of sharply drawn party lines in ecclesiastical matters could not long continue. Accordingly, about the time that political party lines were obliterated by the disruption and disgrace of the Federalists who had been recalcitrant during the War of 1812, the Congregationalists, or orthodox Calvinists, drew themselves away from the Unitarians (1815), who were soon compelled in self-respect and self-defence to band together under a common name and for common purposes. It was the frail invalid Channing that became their first bold and authoritative spokesman in his address at the ordination of Jared Sparks, delivered at Baltimore on May 5, 1819.

Lucidity, courage, and tolerance are the dominant notes of this pronunciamento, and these seem to be the dominant notes of Channing—the man. To them we may add conservatism and may remark that if this quality prevented Channing from anticipating much of the radical, mentally stimulating work of Emerson, and thus becoming a very important figure to later generations, his lucidity gave him an influence over large masses of his contemporaries whom Emerson touched only slightly and indirectly. At bottom, however, Channing, while in many ways a transitional figure between the old Calvinists and the soon to be evolved transcendentalists, had more in common with the latter than with the former. When, as in his sermon “Likeness to God” (1828), he exclaimed, “Christianity, with one voice, calls me to turn my regards and care to the spirit within me, as of more worth than the whole outward world,” he was much nearer to Bronson Alcott than to Jonathan Edwards. Like the transcendentalists, too, he was prone to ignore the fiercer, the ravening side of nature, but, unlike them, he was fuller of sweet persuasiveness than of Orphic assertiveness. No more attractive figure emerges in New England between 1800 and 1830, and he is fully worthy to stand beside the finest figures of the next decade in whose literary and philanthropic labours he helpfully collaborated. His conservatism held him aloof from the antislavery agitators until their liberty of speech was assailed; but he denounced slavery in pages that now seem all the stronger for their moderation. He also aided the new writers and thinkers by his sympathy, although in his own capacity as author he plainly belonged to the semicolonial school that was

passing away. His essays were good, but were reviews of the leisurely, old-fashioned type made popular in his youth. His sermons and addresses were couched in a style which, if relieved of the formalism characterizing that of the generation preceding his own, was nevertheless marked by some of its elegance, poise, and verbosity. He could be eloquent, but not profoundly moving; his ideas were fine and just according to the standards of a simple democracy rather than subtle and original. Yet although it is useless to expect that his voluminous works will ever circulate widely again, it is not useless to call attention to a few productions that deserve remembrance, such as the just and eloquent "Remarks on the Writings and Character of John Milton," the long one-sided essay on Napoleon, and the admirable discourse on war.

Channing's writings on social topics were widely translated, and although, as Renan pointed out, an exponent of primitive democracy had no profoundly important message for the complex civilization of Europe, his views appear to have been somewhat influential in France and other countries. This fact is not surprising when we remember that in religion as in politics liberalism is likely to make home reform the central article of its creed. Boston Unitarianism, as we have seen, has always been closely connected with civic usefulness, with local improvement. Even after the distinguished Hebraist Prof. Moses Stuart of Andover and other orthodox controversialists found that there was little hope of checking the heresy in eastern Massachusetts, they could take comfort from the fact that, while Unitarian churches were established here and there among the New Englanders settled throughout the

country, the sect was far from displaying any great missionary fervour or capacity to adapt itself to the needs of the masses. Indeed, it may well be doubted whether the Boston Unitarian of the type represented a little later by such men as Dr. Holmes, however much he might detest Calvinism, really cared to have his religious tenets shared by the people at large. The Unitarians in their palmy days, from 1825 to 1840, seem to have formed not so much a church or a caste as a small aristocratic class characterized by fluid theological views, classical literary tastes, somewhat formal manners, and fine social and civic ideals. They were well-to-do financially, and mentally and spiritually complacent—facts which through the operation of the law of reaction helped to lead to the birth of transcendentalism. It is not unnatural that many good Unitarians should have imitated Satan in not recognising their own offspring; but the Unitarian antecedents of Emerson, Ripley, Hedge, and other transcendentalists are not to be questioned. It seems reasonable, moreover, to believe that if Unitarianism had not shaken the hold of dogmatism, German philosophy and romanticism in general would not have attracted so many New England minds; and that if Unitarianism had not somewhat choked the springs of spiritual emotionality, there would have been no such wide-spread experimenting with every phase of theoretical and impractical idealism. Transcendentalism cannot, indeed, be adequately accounted for without taking into consideration the imaginative bent of the New England mind, evidenced in the witchcraft delusion and in the Great Awakening. But neither it nor the subsequent and, especially, the recent religious chaos visible



in New England and in those parts of America where the influence of that region is strong—Christian Science, Spiritualism, Buddhism, Brahminism, ritualism, and the like—can be satisfactorily explained without reference to the spiritual repressiveness and mental self-sufficiency of a religion which, since it approximated a philosophy without a positivistic basis, was certain sooner or later to disintegrate.

It is now time to say something about the seeds of transcendentalism, the soil in which they were sown having been described. Just what these seeds, this soil, and the product itself were cannot with certainty be determined, for there is a very amusing lack of unanimity among all the initiated authorities, save only perhaps upon the important fact that no uninitiated person could or can by any possibility adequately understand or describe the movement. Even to call it a movement seems hazardous; to call it a product is ambiguous, especially when one speaks of seeds and soil. Was it a beautiful flower, or useful grain, or only a noxious weed? A weed of a most ill-smelling variety was what the Rev. Andrews Norton thought it when he engaged in his memorable controversy with the Rev. George Ripley (1839); and other orthodox Unitarians, remembering Emerson's disconcerting address before the Harvard Divinity School, were inclined to agree with Mr. Norton. But certainly Miss Margaret Fuller's æsthetic nature would have revolted from contact with anything less lovely than a flower; while such philanthropists as James Freeman Clarke and such strenuous workers as Theodore Parker would sooner or later have held aloof from whatever did not offer the promise of

ripened grain. Were they all, as so frequently happens, partly duped by delusions, partly inspired by illusions? It would seem that they were; that we can trust none of them implicitly; that we must reach our own conclusions slowly, and hold them lightly.

There are, fortunately, a few facts on which we may lay hold. Kant had already laid the foundations of an intuitional philosophy more attractive to aspiring souls than the sensational philosophy of Locke; and Jacobi, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel had developed their own systems, of which some knowledge, much more indirect than direct, had come to a few New Englanders. The writings of Schleiermacher were more widely known, while the romantic literature of Germany as interpreted by Carlyle was studied with eager interest. We have already seen how Wordsworth, whose poetry has its transcendental elements, became fairly popular before 1830, and it is not surprising that there should have been considerable interest taken in the more or less Germanized Coleridge. An edition of the latter's *Aids to Reflection* was published in 1829, while the essays of Carlyle were accessible in the numbers of the *Edinburgh Review* before Emerson in his friendly zeal collected them in book form (1838). There can be little doubt that from 1820 such young men and women in New England as demanded more emotional excitation than Unitarianism offered them and were repelled by the formal English classics of the eighteenth century, whether in prose or verse, read with avidity whatever romantic literature and transcendental philosophy came in their way. Nor did England and, indirectly, Germany furnish all their reading, for the eclectic philosophy of Cousin

was heartily welcomed by them, and a little later the socialistic schemes of Fourier obtained at least a respectful hearing. Indeed, so great was the interest in foreign literature that Dr. Nathaniel Peabody and his daughter Elizabeth—the latter subsequently well known for her educational and literary work—opened a foreign bookstore and reading-room in their house, where such celebrities as Washington Allston, Emerson, Hawthorne, and others were frequently to be met. It was here that a bright young woman, of whom Dr. Hale tells us, first became acquainted with the *Revue des deux Mondes*, and declared that it was “a liberal education!”

Goethe was a more liberal one, and was probably the only German writer whose works were fairly familiar to many of the transcendentalists, including Emerson. A few persons, however, among them the Rev. George Ripley and the Rev. Frederick Henry Hedge, not merely studied German literature and philosophy with great zeal, but made their studies useful to their fellow-citizens by means of translations, particularly by those that appeared in Ripley's series of volumes entitled *Specimens of Modern Standard Literature* (1838). An impetus to the study of German had been given at the close of the second decade of the century by the return from Göttingen of three brilliant young men—Edward Everett, George Ticknor, and George Bancroft. About 1825 also Harvard was fortunate enough to secure as instructor in the language an admirable political exile, Charles Follen, who seems to have had a strong hold upon his pupils. The influence exerted by these men upon contemporary American scholarship and literature, while not inconsiderable, does not by itself ac-

count for the remarkable zeal for culture that characterized nearly all the men and women affected by transcendentalism. Even if all these people had known their Goethe well the phenomenon would still need further explanation. The fact seems to be that transcendentalism was at one and the same time a movement for greater culture and a movement for greater and freer spiritual life, each movement giving impetus to the other. Emerson in his well-known lecture on the new "ism" emphasized the latter phase as far the more important, and was doubtless right from his point of view. It was the movement for greater and freer spiritual life that gave tone to many of his own writings as well to those of Alcott and Thoreau; and it was this awakening that lent needed assistance to the cause of abolition. But without the movement for culture transcendentalism would not have been nearly so memorable in the history of American literature, for this affected strongly writers like Longfellow who stood comparatively aloof from the spiritual and political enthusiasms of the period, and like Lowell, who soon outgrew them. Rarely indeed has a zeal for the things of the mind so permeated a population as was the case in New England during the decades from 1830 to 1870. Men and women whose incomes supplied them only with the necessities of life counted translations of the classic books of the chief literatures among those necessities. It is permissible to smile, perhaps, at the seriousness with which the philosophy of Plato and the sacred books of the East were discussed by prim Occidentals, whose descendants have in some cases accepted with blind faith the mystical doctrines their ancestors dallied with; but it is not



permissible to deny the beautiful and ideal life of the mind and the spirit led by many an obscure but aspiring soul in the New England of the transcendental period.

It is the combination of these two movements, one mental and one spiritual, that makes New England transcendentalism unique. It was not, as its historians, such as Mr. O. B. Frothingham, have long since declared, a phase of the history of philosophy, as in Germany, or merely a phase of the history of literature, as in England. It dominated the actions as well as the thoughts of men. It was a religion, a life. This was possible, as we have seen, because Unitarianism had broken down Calvinistic dogmatism, yet had failed to satisfy the spiritual needs of those of the newer generation who demanded outlets for emotions kindled by the literature of the romantic period. It was possible also because New Englanders were an imaginative people and speculative as well. Even the author of *The Freedom of the Will* had been a poet-mystic, and many a divine after him had boldly grappled with the subtlest problems of theology. It was possible, furthermore, because New Englanders were sincere, courageous, independent, simple in their lives, and less hampered by traditions of caste than any European people; indeed, less hampered than their own ancestors had been. Moreover, it was an age of aspiration throughout the world. The railway and other modern inventions seemed to have ushered in a new era of prosperity; schemes of social reform, many of them Utopian in character, were in the air; political revolutions were breaking out. Finally, it was a period of American history in which politics offered no great allurements to young men trained as the best New Eng-

landers were. Although Daniel Webster had already become the idol of his countrymen, it was plain that the democratic rule of Jackson offered more opportunities to the tricky politician than to the trained statesman. The slavery question cried for heroic treatment, yet conservatives who wished the Missouri Compromise to stand were in a large majority everywhere. Besides, the average American appeared to be neglecting his manners, his education, his religion, in order to get rich quickly. Speculation in railways, public lands, "wild-cat banks," seemed to have vulgarized the country and thrown it into violent turmoils. By the law of reaction there could have been nothing more natural to a noble-natured, finely trained young New Englander, a scion of decayed but eminently respectable Federalism, than an almost violent recoil upon the inner life, the life of the spirit, as the only sure hope for the regeneration of his beloved country, the only sure refuge for his own soul from the prevailing sordidness and vulgarity of the epoch.

It was not until the fall of 1836 that the new movement was in the least organized; indeed, it is almost correct to say that it never was really organized. On September 19th of that year Emerson, Hedge, Alcott, James Freeman Clarke, and Prof. Convers Francis met at the house of George Ripley and formed the nucleus of a group addicted to speculative discussion which is generally known as the Transcendental Club. Two new members were shortly added, one of them being Orestes A. Brownson, who was shortly to establish his own *Boston Quarterly Review* and later to become a convert to Roman Catholicism—a brilliant man, influential in his day, but scarcely

requiring discussion in these pages. The next year added, among others, Margaret Fuller and Theodore Parker (1810-60), the latter one of the most radical of the theologians and reformers produced during this radical epoch, yet withal a man of great good sense and practical energy, a writer by no means devoid of stylistic power, and probably the truest and most erudite scholar of the whole transcendentalist body. In some respects it would have been hard to get together a more incongruous assortment of persons; but they at least agreed in relying on intuitions rather than on reason or tradition, in believing that a new birth of the spirit was necessary and at hand, in idealizing and exalting the individual, in setting great store by culture, and in inculcating and practising the virtue of toleration. With these points of agreement they could and did differ as much as they pleased about other matters. When their dreams of a speedy social regeneration were more or less over, each could go quietly upon his appointed way—Emerson to give oracular lectures and Alcott Orphic conversations. In other words, they had not been warped by organization—a fact which, while good for them, partly explains the difficulty most people have experienced for the last two generations in endeavouring to say precisely what New England transcendentalism meant. No wonder good, common-sense contemporaries shook their heads at the mere mention of the name, or that irreverent editors in the more benighted States poured forth upon the new heretics a flood of jests and execrations.

Little came of the "Club" for a few years save talk and an occasional pamphlet or book, but in 1841 one of

its chief members took a step that will probably never be forgotten. GEORGE RIPLEY, with the aid of some zealous supporters, founded the Brook Farm Association. He was at this time not yet forty, having been born in Greenfield, Massachusetts, October 3, 1802. After a wholesome rearing he passed through Harvard, studied for the ministry, and in 1826 took charge of a newly established Unitarian society in Boston. He now married a Miss Dana and devoted himself partly to his pastoral work, partly to philosophical studies, amassing in the latter pursuit what was then a large collection of books in French and German. Gradually and very calmly he became in spirit more of a social reformer than of a preacher and theologian. This change was fostered by his enthusiastic wife, and the pair resolved to turn their humanitarian theories, so in accord with the spirit of the age of Owen and Fourier, to immediate practical account. Subscriptions were secured from friends and relatives, Ripley pledging his library for his own \$1,500, and on September 29, 1841, the "Articles of Association of the Subscribers to the Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education" had been signed by ten persons representing twenty-four shares of \$500 each.

A perusal of these articles ought to convince any one that, however impractical the Brook Farm experiment was, it was begun by Americans who had not entirely parted with their common sense and capacity for affairs. Each shareholder was to receive a moderate interest on his stock, and his responsibility was strictly limited. If the purchase of a not very good farm in West Roxbury, nine miles from Boston, and the attempt to cultivate it



profitably be adjudged to indicate folly on the part of the experimenters, it may be argued that such folly still characterizes thousands of Americans who are commonplace enough in every other respect. The co-ordinate establishment of a school was not in the least incongruous, as many subsequent institutions have shown; and the enterprise in this regard was successful. Success was also attained in the main object the founders set before themselves—to wit, the rational and enjoyable simplification of life. However freakish the undertaking may have seemed to conservative contemporaries, and however fairly all withdrawals from the world may be criticised on the score of abandonment of inherited social duties—a criticism which reformers should not be expected to treat very seriously—it seems clear that on the whole the life led at Brook Farm during the first stage of the experiment approximated that ideal of “plain living and high thinking” which has always been dear to bard and sage. Even Hawthorne, who soon withdrew and was by nature unfitted for such a co-operative Utopia, bears witness to the “sunniness of temper” that characterized his fellow soft-handed labourers. Even Charles A. Dana, afterward as editor of the *New York Sun* noted for a different quality of temper, must have found the life fascinating, for he clung to the enterprise with great constancy. Nor was it altogether an easy matter for leaders like Ripley and his wife and sister to keep a hundred or more men, women, and children living in harmony and happiness, if only on account of the numerous visitors who came to amuse themselves and to satisfy their curiosity. Yet with due allowance for the tendency of survivors to idealize a romantic experience of

their youth, it appears certain from the testimony gathered that the Brook Farm Association was free from most of the vulgarities and eccentricities that characterize self-conscious segregations of human beings. It seems plain also that the charge of impracticalness should not be unqualifiedly brought against the promoters of the scheme, for it is not certain that, if they had had a little more capital, they might not have made profitable the subsidiary trades carried on, and have finally emerged from the difficulties that soon began to confront them. The adoption of Fourier's principles (1844) increased rather than diminished these difficulties, and the profits resulting from the establishment of a literary organ, *The Harbinger*, were naturally not sufficient to pay for the rebuilding of the not completed and uninsured phalanstery, which was burned on March 3, 1846. Even the Ripleys and the faithful John S. Dwight, afterward known as a writer on music and as the author of the good lyric entitled "Rest," were forced to admit that the regeneration of society was farther off than they had dreamed.

The Brook Farmers, who had declined from the pristine state of innocence and truth that had attracted such aspiring pupils as George William Curtis and his brother, went their several ways. Ripley after a short time found a vent for his unquenched activities in sympathetic and scholarly reviews furnished to the columns of the New York *Tribune*, whose eccentric editor, Horace Greeley, had been a warm friend of Brook Farm during its Fourierist stage. The conscientious character of these appreciations of books and writers did much to raise the level of newspaper criticism throughout the country; and

Ripley also performed a useful service to contemporary scholarship by editing with Dana the *New American Cyclopædia* (1857-63). But although when he died, on July 4, 1880, he seemed to be a literary figure of some importance, his writings have proved even more ephemeral than might have been expected, and he survives solely as the founder of Brook Farm. Yet as such his place in literary history is secure; for, although neither Emerson, nor Margaret Fuller, nor Alcott, nor Parker, nor several other leading transcendentalists took active part in the experiment, they encouraged it by their counsels and visits; while the country at large, especially after the appearance of Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance*, took such an amused interest in it, that at present the word "transcendentalism" is probably more likely to call up in many minds visions of poetical ploughmen and philosophical milkers than to suggest the more specifically spiritual and literary features of the movement.

Community life was not, however, peculiar to transcendentalism nor specifically characteristic of it. Emerson, living more or less apart at Concord and casing himself in a kind of temperamental ice which the sun of Margaret Fuller's effusiveness could not melt, was as typical a transcendentalist as the less individualistic Ripley. But Emerson's friend Amos Bronson Alcott, the most eccentric figure of the period, carried the communal idea, as he did most others, to the verge of absurdity, or rather beyond it. Alcott was born on a Connecticut farm, November 29, 1799. By the age of fifteen he was at work in a clock factory, but soon went on the road as a peddler and book agent. For four years he made trips to Virginia and the

Carolinas, intending to teach, but being forced to peddle, now making money, now losing it through both illness and extravagance. His prime object was to help his father, but he returned from his last journey over \$400 in debt—a veritable American Moses Primrose.

At the age of twenty-six he found himself teaching the village school at Cheshire, Connecticut, and in what might have been his proper element. With little or no knowledge of the theories of Pestalozzi, he undertook needed reforms which soon exposed him to the wrath of his conservative employers and drove him from school to school. At last, in 1834, he established his famous school at the Masonic Temple, in Boston, and for a time seemed to have achieved success. But within five years he had been sold out and forced to remove with his wife and daughters to Concord, where the second of the young girls, Louisa May (1832–88), grew up to describe the sweet, primitive life led by herself and her sisters in a series of widely read books, of which the first, *Little Women* (1867), is probably the most popular.

After studying the history of Alcott's Boston school one may readily admire him both as an educational reformer and as a pure-hearted enthusiast, but one can easily see why he failed. It was indiscreet enough to hold long conversations with his pupils and to ply them with searching questions about the Bible and theology; it was still more indiscreet to publish these *Conversations with Children on the Gospel* (1837), especially to include some discussion of the phenomena of birth. If girls and boys were to be lured away from the land of common sense by this Socratic Pied-Piper, there would be in all literal-



ness "the devil to pay." No wonder, then, that the newspapers attacked him or that he was threatened with mobbing; no wonder also that brave and far-sighted men like Emerson wrote letters in his defence. The visionary was ahead of his generation in some particulars, but there could be no practical success for an educator who was already a vegetarian, an abolitionist, a non-resistant, an advocate of woman's rights, a mystic philosopher and author. He was more in his element as a neighbour of Emerson's, free to dream and converse and write journals to be bound up as "Scriptures"—in short, to lead the life of a sage somewhat after the fashion of the Orientals he admired.

It is needless to describe his endeavour to establish at "Fruitlands" a more ideal community than Brook Farm. The philosopher forbade the use of manure and the planting of anything that grew downward rather than up into the air, nor would he have canker-worms disturbed. He was himself prepared to die after the failure of "Fruitlands," but his wife persuaded him to live. So thoroughly indeed did he take her counsels to heart that he idealized for nearly forty years longer, and did not actually die until March 4, 1888. He continued to hold his select "conversations," especially in the West, and whatever we may think of his philosophic mysticism we can scarcely withhold our admiration from a modern Iamblichus who, at the age of eighty-one, could travel five thousand miles during the coldest months and earn the sum of \$1,000 by discussing transcendental and transcendent themes. People gaped at him, but respected him, and insistent questioners succeeded in driving him into pitying silence rather than into a corner. Why should

he prove the "doctrine of the creation of evil by lapse," when, as an expounder of his philosophy declares, "real proofs are insights into genesis"? As soon expect spirits to converse freely when a sceptic is in the room. So he talked on, while his daughter wrote books that brought comparative wealth to the family, and at the close of his life, long after his dearest friend, Emerson, had attained genuine renown, he, too, had his brief moment of triumph. The Concord Summer School of Philosophy and Literature was founded in 1879 and made him its patron sage. He enjoyed his new honours and coquetted with religious orthodoxy, but in 1882 fell into a state of mental decline attendant upon a stroke of apoplexy.

Whether in his capacity of philosopher or religious idealist he was much more than an aspiring soul is a question that need not be discussed here. As an educational reformer he was a good deal more, and he was probably something more as a writer, although this is not the usual opinion. His *Orphic Sayings* contributed to *The Dial* brought him harsh criticism and ridicule, at which his admirers have expressed a not justifiable indignation. Orphic literature is to-day best adapted to private circulation, as Emerson, who was sometimes scarcely less guilty than Alcott, seems to have thought when he advised against the publication of his friend's philosophic romance entitled *Psyche*. Emerson, indeed, was constantly regretting that a man who talked so well wrote so ill, and taking their cue from Emerson, Lowell and other critics have treated Alcott the author with scant courtesy. Yet while it would be absurd to attribute great power or charm to Alcott's scraps of speculation or to his jottings upon social and

literary topics gathered in his *Tablets* and his *Table Talk*, or even to his reminiscential *Concord Days*, it would be unjust to deny that these books contain suggestive pages worthy of the attention of those who do not read as they run. The essay on Emerson also and the pastoral monody "Ion" devoted to his memory are by no means the work of a feeble and bungling hand. It is much nearer the truth to argue with Mr. F. B. Sanborn, Alcott's loyal biographer, that as the sage grew older his mastery of the written word developed to a considerable degree. If such be the case, he is entitled to his niche in American literature, not merely because he was a typical and leading figure in the great transcendental movement, but also because a tiny portion of its literary energy informed his unconventional books.

## CHAPTER XIII

### TRANSCENDENTALISM—ITS INTERPRETERS

IF Alcott was the high priest of transcendentalism, Parker its militant advocate, and Ripley its practical exponent, Emerson was its ethical and Margaret Fuller its social and critical interpreter. No one was more fully identified with the movement than this interesting woman, and probably no one more thoroughly embodied in the public eye its pretensions and its foibles. Her friends admired her with a loyal extravagance that at times seems pathetic, at times ridiculous; but her hostile critics, of whom her sharp tongue gained her many, treasured their wrath against her and used their opportunities for depreciation so effectively as partially to obscure her genuine worth as a critic of distinct acumen and fine culture as well as her still higher claims to regard as a truly noble soul. Harsh things are still said of her, and the loyalty of some devoted women and of her biographer, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, cannot be held to have secured her the position in the history of American literature that is her due. Probably the "Margaret" of Emerson, the Channings, and the other elect Bostonians of two generations ago is gone forever, but the Mme. Ossoli of whom Landor wrote his excellent lines is surely recoverable.



SARAH MARGARET FULLER was born on May 23, 1810, in Cambridgeport. Her father, Timothy Fuller, lawyer and Democratic Congressman, seems to have been a man of a somewhat Roman cast of mind, which made him a very bad tutor for his daughter, whose mind was by nature romantic. He forced her studies, especially in Latin, impaired her constitution, and unintentionally made her childhood miserable in a way and to an extent afterward well described by her in a chapter of an unfinished autobiographical story. Several years at school could not overcome the morbidity previously stimulated, nor appreciably check her eccentric assertiveness or her sentimentality. A more prepossessing appearance might have led to her giving fewer hours to Greek and German and have rendered her a less formidable personage to her acquaintances of either sex; but it was death not love that was to clarify her turbid spirit.

It was the death of her father, in 1835, that changed her from a phenomenal and disconcerting young person into a talented woman. She devoted herself to her mother and her brothers and sisters, even to the point of injuring her health. She gave up her long-cherished plans of travel in Europe, and after a short period of waiting, during which she chastened her spirit by reading and by contemplation of nature, she began to teach in Alcott's notorious school. But that ill-fated experiment was already in the throes of dissolution, and Miss Fuller was soon forced to accept a position in Providence which she seems to have filled satisfactorily, but with too much self-consciousness—a trait abundantly evident in her correspondence of this period.

It was not long, however, before she gave up regular teaching and established herself with her family in Jamaica Plain, a suburb of Boston, where she was free to make the most of the heyday of transcendentalism. Her relations with its leaders were close, but need not be described here. Nor can more than a word be spared for the "Conversations" she conducted for several years with a group of cultivated Boston women. Such amiable entertainments are once more fashionable, but it may be doubted whether they are often informed by the sprightliness and the well-meaning, if somewhat audacious, striving for culture that marked the gatherings in which Margaret Fuller discoursed upon Greek mythology and kindred topics. On the other hand, so expansive were the men and women of that golden day, so lavish were they in applying "noble" and similar epithets to one another, that it is quite possible that even conservative modern critics exaggerate their attainments and achievements.

One achievement of Margaret Fuller and her group offers, however, no obstacles to calm critical investigation. This is the famous organ of transcendentalism, *The Dial*, which grew out of sundry discussions held at meetings of the "Club." The general worthlessness and the colonial character of such American literature as they were not themselves producing was of course a prime article of faith, and the enthusiasts were confident that the new literary era that was fast dawning needed a harbinger. They thought they had discovered one in a magazine conducted by that versatile Englishman Heraud, the friend of Carlyle and later a dramatic critic of slight prominence. But this hope failed them, Brownson's *Boston*

*Quarterly* was too narrow for them, and they finally, after much heart-searching, launched their own periodical. Alcott gave it a name and contributed to it some of his most enigmatical writings, but, as was natural, he soon proved true to his reputation as a "come-outer." It is scarcely a matter of question that it was chiefly to Margaret Fuller's energy, her acknowledged literary ability, and her incisiveness of mind that the new organ owed its actual birth.

The first number, which consisted of one hundred and thirty-six octavo pages, bore the date of July, 1840, and appeared under the editorship of Miss Fuller, who managed to hold her arduous and far from lucrative position for two years. Then Emerson took charge, and under still greater difficulties kept the enterprise going for two years longer. The public, when it was not abusive, was apathetic, subscribers were few and far between, only a small number of writers could be counted on to contribute for mere love of the cause, and there was even disaffection in the transcendentalist camp. Alcott thought the numbers tame and conventional, while the average editor thought them drivelling and insane, especially when they made room for Alcott's own *Orphic Sayings*. But on the whole, the transcendentalists—Emerson, Parker, the poet and painter Cranch, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller herself, and a number of minor writers—gave their time and labour to the undertaking, and it made a few warm friends for itself in both America and England. Even if it had done nothing else of consequence than encourage the genius of Thoreau, it would not have lived in vain. But it did much more. It stimulated Margaret Fuller and perhaps

Emerson, it preserved a few good essays and poems that might otherwise have escaped publication, it afforded many people an opportunity to perceive that transcendentalism was not so absurd as they had deemed it, and, most important of all, it gave a new impetus and in some ways a new direction to literary energy, especially in New England. It is perhaps too much to say that it opened a new era in American literature, for many of the best New England writers were unaffiliated with it and such literature as there was in the Middle and Southern States had taken its trend before 1840; but the genuine historical importance of the four volumes is indisputable and considerable.

Their literary importance, strictly speaking, is less considerable, but still not contemptible. The reader who turns their pages is confronted by well-known essays and poems of Emerson's, by some of Margaret Fuller's best papers, including that on Goethe; by solid lucubrations from the pen of Theodore Parker. The poetry is perhaps more striking than the prose—is indeed of higher quality, not merely than that to be found in other magazines of the period, but than much admitted to periodicals of to-day. It does not seem entirely fanciful to discover in it a new, somewhat embryonic lyrical quality, due, perhaps, in the main to the influence of Shelley and not destined to come to maturity, but deserving of recognition and praise. There are also to be noted articles on music and art, and papers dealing with foreign literature as well as with such British authors as Shelley, Keats, and Landor. These, with reprints of rare poems like Henry More's "Cupid's Conflict," and with extracts from various



Oriental "Scriptures," are at least of importance in the history of American culture. But it must be at once confessed, on the other hand, that there is much amateurish writing, not a little that is rhapsodical, and enough that is ponderous to prove how trying a task the editors undertook. Papers of nearly thirty pages on "The Origins of Christianity," articles made up of translated extracts, "A Voyage to Jamaica" accomplished in two sections—these things were not then and are not now alluring. But, after all, this is only saying that *The Dial* is true to its name and similar to every other defunct magazine in marking the progress of time. It is less dull than most similar productions and it reflects great credit upon Margaret Fuller and Emerson and their collaborators.

When she gave up *The Dial* and ceased to visit Brook Farm and to hold her Conversations—that is, when she emerged from the transcendentalist circle—Margaret Fuller entered upon what is in many ways the most interesting stage of her career. From June to September, 1843, she travelled in what was then the far West of Illinois and Wisconsin, and was not greatly disturbed by the rawness of the new civilization. Her experiences were recorded in her *Summer on the Lakes*, a small volume, uneven in merit, not free from amateurishness, but more interesting than such publications usually are. Late in 1844 she removed to New York to become literary critic of the *Tribune*, and was for a while an inmate of the home of its visionary but kindly and influential editor, Horace Greeley. Her work was partly journalistic, partly critical, partly philanthropic, and notable in all its

phases. Two years later she went to Europe with friends, and described the many sights and celebrities she saw in well-written letters to the *Tribune* and to private correspondents. Perhaps Mazzini, with whom she contracted a genuine friendship, is the personage that stands out best from her pages, but their chief interest is derived from the character of the writer herself. Her patriotism deepens, her criticism becomes firmer, her views of men and politics widen, and her generous love for the cause of human freedom grows so intense as to be thoroughly inspiring. It was, of course, an inspiring epoch of revolutions, and, as she spent the years from 1847 to 1850 in Italy, and mainly in Rome, she was enabled to be something of an actor in the events she criticised. A secret, romantic marriage with Giovanni Angelo, Marquis Ossoli, in 1847 and the birth of a son in 1848, gave her an inward solace to balance the outward satisfaction she took in a life that offered wider prospects than provincial America had afforded her aspiring spirit. Then came the Roman Revolution in 1849, the defection of the new Pope from liberalism, the siege of the city by the French. Her spirits rose and fell with the popular cause, for which she exerted all her heroic energy, especially in hospital service. When the city succumbed she escaped with husband and child to Florence, and later the pair determined to try their fortunes in the more stable republic of Margaret's nativity. They set sail from Leghorn in May, 1850. After a trying voyage the port of New York had been almost won, when a tremendous storm came up and the vessel was driven ashore at Fire Island early in the morning of July 19. The details of

the wreck are somewhat confused, but we are concerned merely with the fact that the Ossolis all perished, the body of the child alone being recovered.

It is not surprising that the literary fame of Margaret Fuller has not been such as to satisfy her friends. Her letters and other memorials, while worth reading, are not pre-eminent in their class, and, as we have seen, her personality has been unattractive to many persons who have not concealed the fact. Her best work, moreover, was done in criticism, a form of literature that attains immortality so as by fire. While easily the best sympathetic critic produced in America before 1850, she was not a great stylist nor the possessor of a matured and adequate method. She was capable at times of admirable phrasing, her acumen was often manifested in psychological and æsthetical observations worthy of a master critic, her range of reading was remarkably wide and not superficial, but even to the end of her life she remained too much of a rhapsodist and—one hesitates to say it—of an amateur. The logic of composition seemed to elude her—her essays and books were rarely well constructed. In consequence they are not on the whole attractive reading, while the limitations imposed upon her by her transcendentalism, by her comparative lack of sympathy with whatever is not ebullient, aspiring, spiritual, prevent them from being catholic and authoritative. It was her misfortune to be followed by the far more brilliant and subtle Lowell, and by a generation trained to demand either an academic poise or an impressionistic volatility, neither of which can be found in her writings.

Of her works, which in the collected edition of 1855

fill four volumes, the most important are probably *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1844) and *Papers on Literature and Art* (1846). The first is too discursive and unmethodical, as even her friendliest critics admit; its prose is often too poetical; but it is full of sound and sometimes striking thoughts aptly expressed, and its tone consistently flies high. It proves that her mind could play freely about her subject except when her feelings were greatly stirred, in which case she exhibited a free play of heart. Much better evidence of her critical capacity is furnished by her collected papers. None of these, except, perhaps, that on Sir James Mackintosh, is very satisfactory as a whole; most of them betray in their structure their magazine origin; but all, including the slight dialogues, are readable and suggestive. Her overestimation of Campbell and Southey, her elaborate discussions of long-forgotten dramas, merely prove that she was not granted much more prescience than is normally allotted to critics. Her discussion of American literature did some injustice to Longfellow and Lowell, the latter of whom replied oversavagely in the *Fable for Critics*; but even in the case of these two poets she was not entirely wide of the mark in her strictures, while her praise of Brockden Brown was generous to a fault. Nor was she less successful when dealing with subjects farther afield. Her essay-dialogue devoted to the two Herberts is a subtle and interesting piece of criticism, although it seems clear that she minimized or, in her transcendental exaltation of soul, did not recognise the paltry egotism that marred the character of Herbert of Cherbury. But with all their limitations her essays are



much more deserving of praise and perusal than the latter-day public seems to think.

The earliest and most elaborate memoir of Margaret Fuller was written by three of her transcendentalist friends—James Freeman Clarke, William Henry Channing, and Emerson. The first-named is still remembered as the author of *Ten Great Religions* and *Antislavery Days*. The second, a nephew and biographer of the great Dr. Channing, had a reputation for spontaneous eloquence that secured him important Unitarian pulpits both in America and in England. The third is coming more and more to stand out as the most conspicuous figure connected with transcendentalism and as one of the few truly eminent American writers.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON was born in Boston, May 25, 1803. His father, William, was a Unitarian clergyman of some literary attainments, and on both sides the boy's ancestors represented the best blood and training New England could furnish. William Emerson died early, however, and Ralph Waldo's bringing up devolved on an excellent mother and on an aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, a strong, high-minded character. There was a large family of children and little money to support them, yet New England thrift prevailed, and but for weak constitutions it seems likely that there would have been three notable Emersons instead of one. Edward Bliss Emerson and Charles Chauncey Emerson both died early, but left behind fragmentary writings of promise; Ralph Waldo Emerson after graduation seemed also destined to go into a decline, but a visit to the South checked the disease. He had previously led the life of a rather

subdued boy, had done some reading, written a little verse, passed through school and Harvard College without conspicuous success, and studied for the Unitarian ministry. The teaching of Everett and Ticknor had doubtless impressed him, but while he showed an open mind with respect to new literary influences, it is plain that on the whole he was slightly melancholy, rather formal, independent—anything but glowing and transcendental. Cool and disengaged he was destined to remain, although the idealism shown in his early fondness for Plato was to render him sufficiently sympathetic with transcendentalism to make him a sort of intellectual clearing-house for all the enthusiasts connected with the movement. He was from the beginning not sympathetic enough with Unitarianism to make his long continuance in its ministry a possibility.

A little schoolmastering preceded the Southern journey, and some lounging, partly due to his health, followed it. Then he became associate, and shortly full pastor of the Second Church in Boston. Here he served conscientiously, but not brilliantly, until 1832, when, conceiving that the use of the elements in the communion should be discarded, he severed his connection with his congregation. There were other reasons for his feeling out of place in the ministry, and the reader of his farewell sermon will scarcely be inclined to accuse him of insolence toward offices usually deemed sacred, since his professed lack of interest in these was but part and parcel of the mental disengagement that had marked him from his youth. Like a true idealist, he was not merely not content to remain in a half-way house, but was resolute, so

far as he could, to forget its existence. Yet being nothing of an agitator, he broke gently with Christianity, a fact the less surprising when we learn that early in 1832 he lost his wife, to whom he had been married for three years. Disheartened and in poor health, he resolved to try a change of scene, and the following winter sailed for Malta.

The journal he kept throws much light upon his character and is specially interesting in view of his later depreciation of the advantages derived from foreign travel. He displayed no such receptivity toward the charms of Europe as Allston, Irving, and Cooper had done. He was less colonial and more self-centred than they—or better, he was more centred in his own ideas. He was, however, desirous of meeting a few men whose writings had impressed him—chief among them Carlyle, with whom he formed one of the most beautiful friendships recorded in the annals of literature. He displayed his Americanism in the thorough fearlessness and partial narrowness of his judgments—none of the famous men he met were of the first class—all were deficient “in insight into religious truth.” In other words, he encountered no “sage” such as he himself was developing into, and he was disappointed. In October, 1833, he was back in New England, which was soon to have a surfeit of every kind of insight.

After a little preaching he settled down in Concord, destined to be his permanent home, and supplemented his fixed income by lecturing, choosing at first scientific topics. The choice was fortunate, since the study it occasioned supplied him later with abundant illustrations

well suited to the period of his activity and to the practical audiences it was his lot to address. To the same cause, also, he doubtless owed in part the enthusiasm of many of his early readers, such as John Tyndall. Another choice was more fortunate still, that of Miss Lidian Jackson for his second wife, with whom he lived in sympathetic happiness from 1835 until his death, April 27, 1882.

No minute account of his uneventful life is needed. After he made manners and morals his chief themes his reputation as a lecturer grew steadily, and the enthusiasm he began to excite in the younger generation, despite his faults of delivery, may be somewhat understood from the glowing pages of Lowell. In 1836 he gave the first really conclusive evidence of his genius as seer, interpreter of the external world, and writer of eloquent prose, by publishing his small volume, entitled *Nature*—a transcendental rhapsody which rises in parts almost to the level of great poetry, a fact that sufficiently accounts for the bewilderment with which it was at first received. The same year he wrote his patriotic hymn for the anniversary of the battle of Concord and proved that he had not been mistaken in previously writing of himself as a poet. He also edited *Sartor Resartus* and two years later Carlyle's *Miscellanies*, incurring no small trouble and financial loss, but securing for himself in return a sympathetic introduction to the British public.

He was now, as we have already seen, the centre of the transcendentalist movement—a centre attracting Alcott and Margaret Fuller and Thoreau, to name no others, but possessed of a certain repulsive power to keep them,



and every one else, at a convenient distance. Whether Emerson understood the temperament that kept him comparatively isolated may be questioned; that no one else understood or understands it may be asserted with some confidence. He was no Dante, no Milton, no Swift. He was a homely, shrewd Yankee who not only attended to his private affairs but was also an exemplary citizen. He could shock even Unitarian clergymen by his Divinity School Address, but he had prudence enough to stand aside from the controversial battle that ensued. He felt no call to abandon his comfortable home at Concord and join the Brook Farmers. Although he supported the cause of antislavery with effectiveness, he could scarcely at any time have been mistaken for a crusader. Thus he was continually displaying a kind of this-worldliness that separates him sharply from the great lonely spirits of the race. Nor can one feel satisfied that his aloofness was due to the presence of some elfin quality in his character. He was no changeling, typical American and New Englander as he was, even to his fondness for matutinal pies. Yet the central fact endures that, however much the transcendentalists hovered about him, however much his lectures and essays made him a mentor to his times and brought him close to the hearts of enthusiasts of both sexes, however much in his mellow old age his fellow-countrymen of East, North, and West delighted to honour him, and however gracefully he received their homage, Emerson remained a being apart, a denizen of another sphere. To call him an idealist does not explain the phenomenon, nor to call him a mystic. Probably all one can do is to leave him as one finds him—a quaint,

engaging figure who has taken up his abode on the confines of the seen and the unseen, who now walks a short space into the beyond, then turns and paces toward us with a smiling face and with entrancing announcements on his lips, but forestalls our questioning and retreats across the mystic border, only to return again and retreat again *ad infinitum*.

The Emerson of 1840 to 1860 was, however, no such elusive personality to his followers as he seems to some of us to-day. He was a stimulator, and it is as a stimulator that he still appeals to thousands who are passing through stages of mental and spiritual culture similar to those experienced by Emersonians during the decades specified. How deeply he affected his disciples may be judged from a well-known sonnet by Matthew Arnold. The *Essays* that drew forth this tribute were published in two series in 1841 and 1844 respectively. They confirmed the reputation that had been steadily growing since the delivery of the Phi Beta Kappa address of 1837 on "The American Scholar"—generally regarded as the new world's Declaration of Independence in respect to the things of the mind. In 1847 Emerson collected his scattered poems from *The Dial* and other periodicals. The next year he made a second visit to England, delivering among other lectures, the successful course on *Representative Men*, which appeared as a volume in 1850, a year after other notable lectures, such as "Man the Reformer," had been published in a volume of *Miscellanies*. The *English Traits*, which summed up his shrewd, subtle, often rash and mistaken, but always interesting impressions of the mother-country and its inhabitants.

did not appear until 1856. He had, in the meantime, continued to lecture and had taken more interest in politics—even to the extent of making campaign speeches. His *Conduct of Life*, published in 1860, was, however, scarcely at first blush the sort of pronunciamento needed at the outbreak of a civil war. Its lecture-sermons on "Fate," "Wealth," "Culture," "Worship," and such apparently general and harmless topics were, nevertheless, not unimportant contributions to the literature of freedom, since they inculcated as no other American's writings did, although not so inspiringly, perhaps, as the *Essays* had done, that patriotic idealism without which the people at large could not have saved their republic. It is worth noting that the whole first edition of this book was sold in two days, which, in view of the turmoil of the times, is more significant to the historian than that Emerson should have puzzled the readers of the newly established *Atlantic Monthly* (1857) with his mystical poem "Brahma."

During the war he delivered a few addresses and at its close issued a new collection of his poems. Other poems, such as "Terminus" and "May Day" were written soon after, and a course of semiphilosophical lectures was delivered at Harvard which gave a title to a posthumous volume, *Natural History of Intellect* (1893). Two volumes of lecture-essays, *Society and Solitude* (1870) and *Letters and Social Aims* (1875), completed the tale of his chief contributions to literature, although he did edit a *Parnassus* of British and American poetry, revise his own poems, and deliver an important address or two, such as the searchingly critical "Fortune

of the Republic," which still deserves to be pondered. On the whole his old age was one of graceful decline. The destruction of his house by fire in 1872 led his friends to make him a generous gift of money, which enabled him to take a third journey to Europe. He returned to receive the enthusiastic welcome of his townsmen, but their sympathy could not check the gradual aphasia and weakening of the memory that rendered his closing years pathetic. At last, however, his Ariel spirit was free to leave the body that had so long clogged it.

It would be idle to claim that the man Emerson has been adequately sketched above. His serenity, benignity, urbanity, have not been emphasized. Too little attention has been paid to his consistent and inspiring optimism and to his complementary critical insight, his ability to analyze calmly and thoroughly the faults and foibles of his age and country. His fine patriotism, his flavour of the soil, his profound sympathy with nature and all that is elemental in humanity—these and many other features of his genius have but been hinted at in the vaguest way. Yet if the man and his career have been so unsatisfactorily treated, what can be said in less space of the philosopher, the poet, the moralist, the seer—in short, the writer whom his fervent admirers place at the head of all American men of letters?

Fortunately, there is no need in a history of literature to discuss a philosopher at great length and in a more or less technical fashion, and just as fortunately there is no certainty that Emerson was, strictly speaking, a philosopher at all. It is hard to perceive how his *Nat-*



*ural History of Intellect*, where, if anywhere, he was called upon to reason systematically instead of presenting his hearers or readers with a number of his own intuitions and with comments upon these, differs markedly from any of the desultory lectures he was in the habit of piecing together out of the jottings of his portfolio. It is true that he defended his own want of system, and equally true that some sort of system is deduced from his writings by thoroughgoing Emersonians. He believed that philosophy would one day be taught by poets, and did his best to hasten the day. But his idealism, which was in part stimulated by contemporaneous discoveries in science, does not on the whole appeal to the practical, positivistic frame of mind superinduced by those discoveries, and it is too insubstantial and cold to satisfy such souls as have rebelled against the dominance of materialistic conceptions of the universe. Like the Unitarians he superseded, he himself has been deserted for more transcendental founders or exponents of cults. To be sure, in the sense that Marcus Aurelius may be called a philosopher, Emerson may probably be called one; yet it seems best to rank them both with the moralists, the great ethical stimulators.

But if we refuse the author of the essays on "The Over-Soul" and "Circles" the title of philosopher, shall we not follow his own lead and call him frankly a great poet, basing the title both on these and similar essays and on the somewhat scanty but still important mass of his compositions in authentic poetic form. Here again the true Emersonian is ready with an affirmative answer. There are many cultivated Americans to whom Emer-

son's poems seem truly great, if not the greatest produced by any of their countrymen. Others equally cultivated maintain, however, that many of his poems are only versified versions of his essays, and declare that save in rare passages he is deficient in passion, in sensuousness, in simplicity, and cramped in his use of the metrical and other technical resources of the true poet. The fact that save for a few perfect pieces, such as the clear-cut "Rhodora" and the impressive "Days," and a slightly larger number of passages, stanzas, and lines, Emerson as a poet has not made his way with English-speaking people outside the Northern and Western States, lends great support to the arguments of his unenthusiastic critics. It can scarcely be denied, furthermore, that poems like "The Dæmonic Love" deal with subjects unfitted for concrete treatment, that true poetic glow and flow are almost entirely absent from Emerson's verses, and that his ever-recurring and often faulty octosyllabic couplets soon become wearisome. That he is at times irritatingly obscure or else uncomfortably profound, that he is given to diffuseness, that he is rarely capable of sustaining himself at a high level of execution, can almost be demonstrated. Worse still, he is prone to jargon, to bathos, to lapses of taste. Witness the following lines from "May Day":

As we thaw frozen flesh with snow,  
So spring will not her time forerun,  
Mix polar night with tropic glow,  
Nor cloy us with unshaded sun,  
Nor wanton skip with Bacchic dance,  
But she has the temperance  
Of the gods, whereof she is one.

But the author of these lines, which with different handling might have been worthy of their substance, is also the poet who gave us the well-known—

He builded better than he knew;  
The conscious stone to beauty grew,

and the less known—

The port, well worth the cruise, is near,  
And every wave is charmed.

He is the fearless poet of "The Problem" and "Good-bye, proud world"; he is the marvellously subtle interpreter of nature as evidenced by "Woodnotes" and "Monadnoc"; he is the tender elegist of the "Dirge" and "Threnody"; he is the wise, mellowed seer of "Terminus." Not only is his volume of verses full of the raw materials of poetry; it contains enough genuinely fine poems and passages in varying styles to lift its author above the category of the minor poets. It is uncritical to rank him with the great British poets, with Shelley or Tennyson, for example, or, as an artist, with his own compatriot, Longfellow, who had a far wider knowledge and a surer command of the technical resources of verse. But to Americans, at least, Emerson is an important poet, whose best work seems likely to gain rather than to lose in value.

What now shall be said of Emerson's prose? Was Matthew Arnold right when, as an experienced critic calmly judging the favourite author of his youth, he denied that the *Essays*, the lectures, and *English Traits* formed a body of prose of sufficient merit to entitle Emerson to be ranked as a great man of letters? It

seems as if the time had come for Emerson's countrymen frankly to accept this verdict. Because of deficiencies both of style and of substance Emerson does not belong to the small class of the great masters of prose. His style, despite the fact that *Nature* and many of the essays contain pages of eloquent prose almost equal in power and beauty to noble poetry, was nearly always that of the lecturer or preacher rather than that of the writer. He too frequently lost the note of distinction and was content if he satisfied his far from exigent audiences. In diction, to be sure, he was a conscious and consummate master, and it need scarcely be said that few writers have surpassed him in the ability to compose a pregnant sentence. But, as is generally admitted and as is shown by his practice of piecing his notes together, he was rarely able to evolve a paragraph, much more a whole essay, in a masterly or even in a workmanlike fashion. It may be granted that critics have overemphasized his lack of coherence, that there is more logical unity in his essays than appears on first reading, that *English Traits* and the later volumes are far from being mere strings of "Orphic Sayings"; but the fact seems to remain that the prose style of Emerson from first to last lacks the firmness, the compass, the precision, the flexibility, the individuality, we demand of the prose writers whom we denominate masters.

In substance also he seems to be less great than he appeared to his contemporaries. This is partly due, paradoxically enough, to his own greatness. He has so leavened the thought of America with his fine idealism, his splendid belief in the capacity and the sacred rights



and duties of the individual, his fearless democratic radicalism, that the latter-day reader receives as a matter of course utterances that thrilled the bosoms of youthful Americans two generations ago. The inspired seer is often in danger of seeming to be only a charming, somewhat impractical old gentleman. This attitude is obviously unjust to Emerson, and, to be candid, is probably seldom assumed by any sound-minded, sound-hearted reader of such nobly stimulating essays as those on "Self-Reliance" and "Spiritual Laws," or of the excellent, if less lofty, papers that make up *The Conduct of Life*, or of the homely discourse on "Civilization," in which, almost without warning, we are suddenly given the injunction—"Hitch your wagon to a star." But despite the continued sale of his works, despite popular votes that place him well to the front of American authors, it may fairly be held that not a few modern readers hold somewhat aloof from him both because of their familiarity with his leading ideas and because of his defects of substance. He is a great inciter to plain living and high thinking, but he is no longer an undisputed oracle on such subjects as "History," "Art," and the like, however charmingly and suggestively he may write about them. It is impossible not to perceive the discursiveness and the rashness of generalization displayed in *English Traits*. His defective sense of literary values, his excessive use of the speaker's privilege to plunder all the provinces of human culture, his relentless exploitation of his happy talent for discovering and presenting apt and telling illustrations, his irritating unwillingness to admit a pessimistic argument within the range of his mental vision,

his almost fatal bias for stating half-truths only—these limitations of his genius detract sufficiently from the substantial value of his work to make it probable, if not certain, that his place is not with the world's masters of thought. On the other hand, it is equally true to maintain that no one can better gauge books and men when he understands them, that no one can range the fields of scholarship with more grace and divine right, that no one has better comprehended or employed the art of illustration, that no one can face unpleasant facts more bravely than Emerson when he thinks fit, or can more effectively express the scorn or reproach they deserve.

Yet whatever we may think of Emerson as philosopher, poet, or man of letters, it would be unjust to deny that he is a great writer in one very high and special sense. Among all Anglo-Saxons there appears to be no one that stands higher than he as an ethical inspirer or stimulator. In standing and character he cannot be ranked with Marcus Aurelius; probably he should not be ranked with the great emperor as a writer, being seemingly less simply and pathetically noble, although in other respects more richly endowed—but it is in the company of Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus that some of us are constrained to place him, and we feel that he would have wished no higher station. For such a station implies that he was not merely a writer whom lovers of all that is nobly ideal in human conduct will not willingly let die, but himself a man who lived up to his ideals—a man worthy during his life to be a pattern to his fellows, and after it a priceless heritage to posterity.

It is not certain that the popularity of Emerson as

a writer has increased since his death, but this has been strikingly the case with his friend HENRY DAVID THOREAU. Indeed, if it had not been the case, the chances are that Thoreau's name would scarcely be known to-day, for his reputation could not well have maintained itself at the very low level it had reached by the time of his death. He was fortunate, however, in having enthusiastic friends destined to do service to his memory, and also in having a subtle and original genius based upon realism, but rising high into idealism. The years have favoured him more than they have any of his friends of *The Dial* group. Mankind has returned more and more to nature, and at the same time has shown a preference for the minute, semiscientific, semipoetic treatment of her which Thoreau was supereminently qualified to give, over the rhapsodical, pantheistic treatment illustrated in the writings of Emerson and other transcendentalists, American and British. In other words, the "poet-naturalist," as Thoreau has been aptly called, has appealed to a positivistic generation more than the "nature poet" has done. Then again, Thoreau in his scholarship, especially in his knowledge and love of Greek, had probably a sounder basis of culture than most of his fellow-idealists; he had also more homeliness, more flavour of the soil, than any other American writer has ever had, save only Walt Whitman. His eccentricities, too, although they have alienated some readers, have probably attracted more; and last, but not least, his prose style seems to be more sustained and varied and thoroughly satisfying than that of any of his contemporaries. If these points in his favour are fairly grounded, there ap-

pears to be no valid reason why his fame as a writer should not continue to increase.

The outlines of his life may be given in brief compass. He was born in Concord on July 12, 1817, and died there on May 6, 1862. Both French and Scotch blood ran in his veins—a fact which perhaps partly accounts for the mixture of liberality and narrowness in his character. He belonged to a simple, attractive family in what persons not of his school would call “humble circumstances.” Whatever his lapses from conventional manners and customs, there is abundant testimony to his capacity for refined intercourse with his relations and friends. He was fitted for college mainly in the schools of Concord, graduated at Harvard in 1837 with a fair record, did a little school-teaching both during and immediately after his student days, and made an early appearance as a lecturer before the Concord Lyceum. An innate love of books, of nature, and of freedom, and an equally innate, though doubtless cultivated, distrust of organized, conventional society led him to seek the simplest, least cramping form of livelihood. This he found in the family trade of pencil-making and in surveying and kindred occasional occupations. Nor is there much foundation for the charge that the necessity of making a living was a sour one to him. All he wished to do was to make a living and at the same time really live, and he carried out both wishes. He began very early to keep methodical journals, in which he expanded the notes he had taken upon his walks and excursions, as well as the thoughts that had occurred to him. By the end of his comparatively short life he had accumulated thirty volumes of



these journals, out of which he had made up his lectures and the few essays and books published under his supervision. Out of them has since come an important portion of the authorized edition of his works.

Shortly after leaving Harvard he attracted the notice of Emerson, and a friendship began between them which led to Thoreau's becoming an inmate of the elder man's home in 1841. Here he remained off and on for two years, making himself useful in practical matters like gardening. There were numerous points of agreement between the two transcendentalists, and it is not to be denied that many passages in Thoreau's writings bear the Emersonian stamp. But Thoreau was far more realistic, dogmatic, and disputatious than his host, and was fully as original in his speculations, besides being widely different in his habits as naturalist and in his relations with society. No one who has read carefully Thoreau's letters written at this period will think of him as an Emersonian in any derogatory sense. For some months in 1843 he served as tutor in the family of William Emerson on Staten Island, his dislike of cities being increased by his proximity to New York. At this time he tried unsuccessfully to increase his income, or rather to satisfy the natural cravings of a writer, by publishing articles and reviews in the struggling periodicals of the day. One prefers to picture him watching the crowds of immigrants landing to seek their fortunes amid the bustle and enterprise he so much scorned.

In 1844 he made pencils in his father's shop. The next year, acting partly on a hint from the younger William Ellery Channing, the poet-comrade of many of

his excursions, he built his famous cabin on Walden Pond, where he lived, with occasional absences, for about two years and a half. The world seems to have taken the experiment more seriously than Thoreau did; indeed many critics, including Lowell, have argued against his antisocial tendencies, or at least have discussed them as though there were the remotest chance that they would corrupt or disrupt society. If there were such a chance, it might be advisable to discountenance the Walden episode and to separate the wheat from the chaff in Thoreau's philosophy of individualism. Men being as they are, however, it seems more reasonable to advise them to read the book Thoreau revised at Walden, the delightful *Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers* (1849), as well as the more famous one that commemorates his retirement (*Walden, or Life in the Woods*, 1854). They may also be safely counselled to read his highly stimulating "Life without Principle," now following, in the volume entitled *Miscellanies*, three great pæans of individualism composed on the occasion of the execution of John Brown. Neither Thoreau nor Brown was an ideal citizen or an infallible reasoner, but the "Plea" of the man who has been called a "skulker" for the man no one ever dared so to denominate is certainly a most inspiring and an essentially manly utterance. In other words, it seems best in this socialistic age to treat Thoreau not as a text for homilies, but as a peculiar genius for the existence of whom the race whose foibles and faults he so unflinchingly exposed ought to be deeply grateful. Wherever we find him, whether rowing upon his beloved Concord, or mending Emerson's fences, or corresponding

with Horace Greeley about the publication of his sparse articles, or lecturing in parlours and on platforms, or building and inhabiting his cabin, or making a bee-line for the top of a mountain with his omnipresent umbrella stuck out behind him, or trudging the sands of Cape Cod, or tracking the Maine woods with the Indian friend he so enthusiastically commemorated—in every action and circumstance of his life down to his cheerfully borne invalidism and death from consumption, no sympathetic student of Thoreau's life and works will find anything that needs evasion or humiliating apology.

Thoreau's writings are now grouped in an edition of eleven volumes, and there is still material to draw upon. *Walden* is doubtless the only book of the series that can strictly be called a classic, or at least a probable classic. This seems partly due to the interest that attaches to the exceptional experiment it describes, partly to a better balancing than is elsewhere attained of its author's impulse to moralize and of his prime purpose to report what he had seen. The *Week on the Concord* contains many pages as charming as anything to be found in *Walden*—indeed, its slight element of movement may make it more charming to some readers; but there is never any telling when or how long the chief oarsman will rest upon his oars or what he will discourse upon. Discussions of Persius and translations of Anacreon inserted in such a book by any other author than Thoreau would smack of vain scholarship or else would indicate the well-known tendency of inexperienced writers to put all they know in one book. Such a naïve exploitation of one's own poetry would also call forth more unfavourable

reviews than Thoreau got, although these would not be likely to force the sales beyond the small figures that enabled Thoreau to boast jokingly that he had increased his library by seven hundred books of his own composition. In other words, the *Week*, while a joy to some readers, is not well enough constructed to rival *Walden* in popular favour.

Much the same statement may be made of all the other volumes. *Cape Cod* is full of good things—for example, the account of the shipwreck on the coast—but the narrative is impeded by too frequent citations from the writings of local antiquaries. One acknowledges that Thoreau is widely read, one grows interested in his exploitations of his prejudices against churches and other institutions, one concludes that few men have ever possessed so accurate an eye. One admits that he can appropriate and make interesting small areas of country, much as Balzac can French provincial towns. But it is probably only the devotee who will not feel that there are pages filled with trivialities and that the book would have been all the better if Thoreau had been able to add to his own dry humour some of the playfulness of a genial humorist like Daudet. The Frenchman has made more out of a lighthouse-keeper than the Yankee has done.

But although *Walden* and the *Week* contain the essential Thoreau that the general reader wishes to become acquainted with, no lover of nature and of literature—and at bottom Thoreau was more a man of letters than a naturalist—will do well to confine his reading to those two books. Enough has been said of *Cape Cod*, and there is no space to describe the merits of *Maine*



*Woods*—a volume which fortunately holds less by the past, through its citations from antiquaries, than by the present and future through its delightful description of a picturesque region which is every day being more appreciated by travellers for sport and pleasure. Stevenson, in spite of his fondness for Thoreau, descanted on the dulness of *The Yankee in Canada*, perhaps unjustly. However this may be, it is certain that the volume entitled *Excursions*, in which this Canada journey is now included, contains essays that mark, in many respects, the highest reaches of Thoreau's genius. "A Winter Walk," though not so clear cut in its pictures as Cowper's admirable passages in "The Task," is surely as full of poetical feeling, and is an admirable specimen of fluid prose. "The Succession of Forest Trees" is homelier, but almost as good of its kind, while the paper on "Walking" and other essays in the volume need no praise at this late day. Nor need one praise the four volumes extracted from his journals and devoted to the respective seasons as they appeared to this most loyal son of Concord and of nature. Something less than praise, but more than mere commendation, may be given to the *Familiar Letters*. They help to a comprehension of their writer and abound in epigrammatic humour and shrewd, sometimes profound observations one would not willingly miss; but they are often too full of self-consciousness and do not warrant our placing Thoreau among the great epistolary artists. So, too, Thoreau's poems, which he was in the habit of scattering through his books and journals, while nearly always interesting, do not add much to the basis of his fame. Even more than

is the case with Emerson, Thoreau, who wrote little verse after he was thirty, presents his readers with the raw materials of poetry rather than with finished products. Here and there one discovers a set of stanzas one marks for rereading, but he has yielded the anthologists few treasures. Emerson thought the lines beginning

Light-winged smoke, Icarian bird

better than anything of Simonides; it would be safer to say that they seem worthy of the Greek Anthology, a fact not surprising when we remember that Thoreau made translations from Æschylus, Pindar, and Anacreon, and that his devotion to Greek poetry from Homer down was deep and unaffected. In some respects he was almost a transplanted Greek.

To attempt to sum up Thoreau's characteristics as a writer is as unprofitable a task as it is in the case of any other genius. He was a moralist, a naturalist, an idyllist, a philosopher of a mixed Cynic and Stoic type, yet withal a transcendentalist, a recalcitrant, on rare occasions a hero worshipper, a humorist, an eccentric—in short, thoroughly original. He was not a little of a pagan, yet if he had slight concern about his soul, he was puritanically in earnest about having a spiritual object in life. In this respect he was affiliated with the transcendentalists, but he was not so expansive as they were in relation with other people. "I find it as ever very unprofitable," he wrote in 1854, "to have much to do with men." Yet few have written more wisely on love and friendship. As a moralist, or, perhaps better, a gnomic writer, he makes a less broad and elevated appeal than Emerson, nor would

one ever think of ranking him with Marcus Aurelius; but in some ways he is a more original and deeper thinker than Emerson and appeals more profoundly to some minds. Emerson tended to use what he saw and read as illustrations of truths derived in the main through intuitive processes; Thoreau often evoked truths from what he saw and read, and thus stood less chance than Emerson of proclaiming half-truths and talking glibly of things about which he knew little. Yet he does not stimulate as Emerson does at his best; he has less of Ariel and more of Puck in his composition. Doubtless to many good persons he seems a Caliban in his relations with church and state; but others will sympathize with him in his attacks upon cant and dogmatism in which he shows himself to be far more of a radical than the serene, disengaged Emerson.

But it is as a writer rather than as a thinker or observer that Thoreau deserves heartiest admiration. We may disagree with him as much as we will, when he preaches or moralizes; we may care very little for the beauties and wonders he discovers in the fields and woods and ponds of Concord; but if we are lovers of good prose we are sure to read him with almost as much interest and pleasure as if we agreed with every word. We delight in his fancy, his imagination, his humour. We discover soon that nearly every page has its surprises in store for us. Sometimes it is a pregnant epigram, sometimes a subtle thought, sometimes a profound observation dealing with an important phase of life or nature. Now he is straightforward and homely, now whimsical and humorous, now sarcastic, now inspiring; then he is detected in a bit of

fine writing, in a lapse into trivialities, in a forcing of his humour, in a touch of vulgarity. He is a cosmopolitan-provincial, a Concord-Greek, an archangel-faun—in other words, a sheer, inexplicable, indescribable genius.

The sun of transcendentalism did not awaken large choirs of poets in New England, but besides stirring into life the master spirits whose work we have been reviewing, it also inspired a few minor but true poets to sing out their gentle souls. At least three of the contemporaries and friends of Emerson deserve to be remembered by his admirers. These are Jones Very (1813–80), Christopher Pearse Cranch (1813–92), and William Ellery Channing, the younger (1818–1901). The first, whose life was chiefly passed in Salem, Massachusetts, was probably the most complete religious mystic of the epoch—a clergyman so spiritual that he almost passed over the bounds of sanity. He published but one book, a small volume of *Essays and Poems*, which appealed only to a select audience that has not grown greatly since new editions have been given to the world. His favourite metrical form was the Shakespearean sonnet, and in expressing his love of God and nature he often struck a note that seemed a far-off echo of some of the greater poet's truest strains. But his lack of variety and of broad human appeal stood in Very's way, and thus such strongly imaginative sonnets as that entitled "The Dead," although preserved by the anthologies, can scarcely be said to be familiar to lovers of poetry.

Cranch, who was a painter as well as a poet and enjoyed a long life spent in many pleasant places, is scarcely better known than Very, although he published three or



four volumes of verse and made a more varied appeal. He did not possess Very's singleness of purpose and displayed less originality and power, never being able to throw off the influence of the poet masters to whom he yielded himself. Cranch translated the *Æneid*, and may be remembered for his poems on "The Rainbow" and the "Aurora Borealis," in which the poet, painter, and transcendentalist are seen charmingly blended, as well as for the following stanza from "Gnosis," a poem much better than its name:

Thought is deeper than all speech,  
Feeling deeper than all thought ;  
Souls to souls can never teach  
What unto themselves was taught.

Less known than Very or Cranch, if that be possible, is the third member of our group, William Ellery Channing, a nephew of the great Unitarian clergyman of the same name. For many years he lived in strict seclusion. Previous to his retirement he had seen something of the world, had married a sister of Margaret Fuller, been the companion of Thoreau on many a journey, and published several volumes of prose and poetry that seemed to his friends, including Hawthorne, really excellent. But he made practically no impression upon his age, whether by his essays in *The Dial*, his refined *Conversations in Rome between an Artist, a Catholic, and a Critic*, his rhapsodical, but valuable, *Thoreau, the Poet-Naturalist*, or his half a dozen volumes of verse. Some people have, indeed, remembered that he wrote the sententious line

If my bark sinks, 'tis to another sea,

as well as the striking lyric entitled "Hymn of the Earth," beginning

My highway is unfeathered air,  
My consorts are the sleepless stars.

But few have taken the trouble to discover the fact that amid much hopeless blank verse in the forbidding volume entitled *Near Home* there are passages of nature description not unworthy of Cowper, and that this is true also of *The Wanderer*, which was favoured with an introduction by Emerson. Nor is nature the only source of Channing's inspiration, as the fine stanzas entitled "New England" that opened his second volume abundantly show. Like all his fellow-transcendentalists, Channing was time and again an errant artist; but as with them, so with him, no one capable of intelligent sympathy will care to play the part of a severe censor. Let his own noble words be an epitaph for himself and his compeers:

Life's wind speeds on, but we are bound  
By memory to our quiet state,  
And sleep in solitude profound,  
Within the caverns of our fate.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is pleasant to record that increased attention is being given to these poets. Mr. Sanborn has edited a volume of Channing's selected verses and Mr. George Willis Cooke has edited *The Poets of Transcendentalism*, the first anthology of its kind (1903).

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE ROMANCERS (1830-50)

WHILE the veterans Irving and Cooper continued their work throughout the period covered by this chapter, they produced nothing comparable in merit to the achievements of the two authors who are generally regarded as the foremost representatives of American literature, Hawthorne and Poe. The minor romancers of the preceding generation were also supplanted by writers who in number and importance marked a real advance of the art of fiction and afforded sure promise of its future progress. Yet whatever the significance of this period to the student, its significance to the reader lies mainly in the fact that it witnessed the production of the short stories of Poe and Hawthorne. It was not until the closing year, 1850, that a single elaborate work of fiction of the first rank was published by any of the newer writers. *The Scarlet Letter* is the only great romance of the period, apart from the work of Cooper, for although Herman Melville's stories of the South Seas are again legitimately attracting attention, they can scarcely be said to be attaining wide currency. The tales of Poe, on the other hand, have gained in their appeal, while those of Hawthorne certainly have not lost. Several reasons for this

supremacy of the short story suggest themselves. Irving had furnished admirable models. The numerous, although mainly ephemeral magazines of the day and the fashionable annuals welcomed contributions of moderate length, while publishers who could pirate British novels were inclined to look askance at long American manuscripts. The success of the tales that *Blackwood's* was publishing was not without its influence, and for writers distrustful of their own qualifications, especially of their ability worthily to rival Scott and Cooper, the short story afforded a safe and congenial form of imaginative composition. Hawthorne and Poe were doubtless attracted to it because of its artistic capabilities and of the peculiar bent of their own powers; but the points in its favour that have just been specified probably counted also with them. It must not be supposed, however, that the long romance was not in vogue, and it should be remembered also that good models of contemporaneous realistic fiction were as yet scarcely to be obtained.

In dealing with these new authors it is natural to begin with NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE (1804-64), whose life overlapped at both ends that of his contemporary, Poe. The greatest interpreter of New England life and character was in point of ancestry admirably qualified for his task. William Hathorne came over with Winthrop in the "Arabella" and settled in Salem. His son inherited his stern Puritanism and was a grim judge of the witches. Farmers and sea captains continued the traditions of the family, though not its fortunes, until on July 4, 1804, the boy that was to make it illustrious was born in the old town, which was soon to decline in



importance as a seaport. His father died in Surinam four years later, leaving, besides his son and namesake, two daughters as well as a widow, who became for the rest of her long life a complete recluse. Despite an inherited tendency to reserve, if not to morbidness, and the far from genial influences exerted by his mother and his elder sister, Hawthorne, although exceptionally imaginative, does not seem to have spent so abnormal a boyhood as might have been expected. At fourteen he passed a year in the wilds of Maine, which probably helped to develop his fine physique and perhaps stimulated his sturdy, democratic patriotism. Two years in Salem followed; then he entered the small, provincial Bowdoin College at Brunswick, Maine. Longfellow was a college mate, as well as two dearer friends, Horatio Bridge, whose *Journal of an African Cruiser* Hawthorne afterward edited, and Franklin Pierce, later President of the United States. His college career was not remarkable except, perhaps, in the fact that association with young men did not induce him to drop his literary ambitions and enter one of the normal paths to that worldly success which has always counted for so much to Americans. After graduating, in 1825, he returned to Salem and led a secluded life for twelve years. He was abnormally sensitive, dreamy, and shy, but one discovers in his solitary writing in his chamber and in his long twilight walks more of self-sustaining imagination, or at worst of sombre fancy, than of misanthropy. In 1828 he brought out an anonymous romance entitled *Fanshawe*, which has not been allowed to slumber in the repose it speedily earned. It was a not overlong story of

a mysterious abduction that took place at a country college in which it is easy to recognise Bowdoin. The hero, who gave the book its title, was a romantic, melancholy, reserved youth who died young. Very faint traces of Hawthornesque qualities are discoverable, but the incipient author had made some progress toward the attainment of a style. After *Fanshawe* a series of short stories was completed and almost published. Undaunted by his failures, Hawthorne continued to write. In 1830 he found an appreciative though not munificent publisher in S. G. Goodrich, who accepted "The Gentle Boy" for his annual, *The Token*, and subsequently took other stories which made no great stir but won their author a few friends. Meanwhile Hawthorne had done some little journeying about New England and New York, and in this way as well as by considerable study had familiarized himself with the history and natural features of the region he was to celebrate in admirable tales and romances.

By 1836 he had become a contributor to such magazines as *The Knickerbocker* of New York, one of the best of its period, and the same year, besides doing editorial work for Goodrich, he compiled a universal history which that exemplary purveyor of literature for children liked "pretty well." Doubtless few juvenile readers of the later *Wonder Book* connected its author with "Peter Parley." The next year, aided secretly by his enthusiastic friend Bridge, Hawthorne issued the first series of *Twice-Told Tales* and increased his reputation, although by no means to the extent that such charming work warranted his few admirers in anticipating. Efforts were now made by editors to secure his services, with the

result that in the *Democratic Review* he shortly found something like an organ, if such a term may be used in connection with his delicate genius. His friends also tried to get him some public position, and finally, in 1839, Bancroft, who was then in charge of the custom-house at Boston, made him a weigher and gauger. Hawthorne measuring coal and trudging the docks is not a spectacle to inspire respect for politics, but the small salary he received was a matter of much importance to him then, for he had become engaged to a refined and fascinating young invalid, Miss Sophia Peabody, a sister of the lady already mentioned as the friend of Bronson Alcott. Their courtship, while not quite so romantic as that of the Brownings, was as beautiful, and the letters that passed between them rank high among the records of loving hearts.

In two years the Democratic party, to which rather oddly Hawthorne and his father belonged, was supplanted by the Whigs, and the young author lost his incongruous office. He then tried still more incongruous work at Brook Farm, but while not disposed to shirk his manual duties, could not enter into the spirit of the enterprise. He lived in an ideal world, but it was not that of the transcendentalists, whose blended egoism and altruism did not appeal to him. So he withdrew, probably not foreseeing that ten years later in *The Blithedale Romance* he would realize upon his investment of time and money. In July, 1842, he was married and immediately took his wife, whose health had improved, to the Old Manse in Concord, where they spent four years of more than conventionally idyllic happiness. The delightful introduc-

tion to the *Mosses* has made the old house as dear to readers of Hawthorne as Daudet's windmill has become to lovers of that sunnier genius. Expansiveness and neighbourliness were not to be expected of so shy a man, but Hawthorne enjoyed in his way the society of Ellery Channing, to a less extent that of Emerson and Thoreau, and even managed to endure one forest interview with Margaret Fuller. He lived chiefly for his wife and for his ideal creations, however, and his cup of happiness overflowed when his daughter Una was born. At Concord he wrote many of his best pieces for the *Democratic Review*, an ambitious periodical that did not pay overwell; he published the second series of *Twice-Told Tales*; and in 1846, the year that saw him return to Salem, he collected the *Mosses from an old Manse*, which perhaps marks, in such achievements as "Rappaccini's Daughter" and "Young Goodman Brown," the culmination of his genius as a story-teller.

Another Democratic administration had been installed in 1845, and a year later Hawthorne's friends secured him another small office—the surveyorship of the Salem custom-house. He has described his official life in the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, a bit of writing that might be compared with one of Lamb's best essays were it not too good to require comparison with anything. In 1849 he was unexpectedly discharged from his office in the midst of his labours on his first great romance, and a few months later his mother died. Other troubles followed, but Hawthorne stuck to his task, which from the nature of the subject would have been of itself sufficient to disturb his sensitive soul. The story of the im-



pression produced by the sombre creation upon the poet-publisher James T. Fields is well known. Equally familiar is the story of the success of *The Scarlet Letter* almost from the moment of its publication, in the spring of 1850. Hawthorne's fame was now secure wherever the English language was spoken, and from that day to this his first important romance has been generally regarded as the greatest work of the imagination produced by any American. There is little reason to dispute this judgment, although it is well to remember that the romance did not cause a revolution in literature or indeed mark such a great step forward as had been made by Hawthorne's predecessors Irving and Cooper, and that the mass of weird, impressive tales written under distressing circumstances by a wayward genius who had died in a hospital a few months before has meant more to the world at large than Hawthorne's masterpiece.

After the publication of *The Scarlet Letter* the romancer removed to Lenox, in the beautiful Berkshire country, where he enjoyed the society of Herman Melville and wrote the delightful *House of the Seven Gables* (1851). A few months later he charmed younger readers, for whom, ten years before, he had written the patriotic stories entitled *Grandfather's Chair*, by retelling, with much freshness and grace, such classical legends as those of Perseus and Midas. *The Wonder Book* that resulted is not the least of Hawthorne's titles to fame. He also collected his last volume of sketches and stories—*The Snow Image and Other Twice-Told Tales*—and, settling near Boston, wrote *The Blithedale Romance*. When it was published, in 1852, this book sustained his reputa-

tion, nor has it lacked admirers since, although it probably has not held its own as its two predecessors have done. The same year was important to Hawthorne because it saw him once more a resident of Concord, this time as owner of The Wayside, and because it was marked by the election of his friend Franklin Pierce to the presidency. To facilitate this not altogether happy result, Hawthorne had written a campaign life of Pierce, thus grieving antislavery friends. The book itself was a creditable and thoroughly honest piece of work, and it was idle to expect Hawthorne, a life-long Democrat and an abhorrer of strife, not to support a candidate who was both a personal friend and an upholder of that Compromise of 1850 which, in the opinion of short-sighted people, was to preserve the peace between the forces of freedom and those of slavery. The romancer did not display great acumen in the matter, but he did display true friendship and a sound heart.

Pierce properly desired to make some returns for Hawthorne's loyalty, and the latter was finally induced to accept the lucrative consulship at Liverpool. He sailed in the summer of 1853, having previously published the continuation of *The Wonder Book*, known as *Tanglewood Tales*. He retained his consulship for four years, seeing much of England and mixing in society in a way to prove that at bottom he was not of an unsocial nature. He continued his habit of taking careful notes of all he saw, and some years later gleaned from them the materials of his descriptive volume *Our Old Home* (1863). While far from being as provocative of thought as Emerson's *English Traits*, Hawthorne's book, which, in spite of protests,

he nobly dedicated to the unpopular Pierce, was more readable and still retains value. The description of his experiences as consul and the tribute to Dr. Johnson for the latter's penance in Uttoxeter would alone make the volume noteworthy. But it is especially important as bearing witness to Hawthorne's sturdy Americanism and to his frankness and intelligence as a critic. He loved the best of England and Englishmen, but was not blind to their faults, although far less severe than most British travellers had been in their strictures on America. In short, *Our Old Home* was a well-meant, able book, which ought to have done more good than it probably did.

After leaving England Hawthorne and his family spent about a year and a half on the Continent, chiefly in Italy. Like Cooper before him, he felt deeply the spell exerted by the fairest of lands and the most historic of cities, and he was more successful than his great forerunner in giving adequate literary expression to his feelings. *The Marble Faun*, begun in Italy, but finished and published in England under the title of *Transformation* (1860), placed Hawthorne with Byron, Rogers, and Ruskin as an interpreter of Italian art, antiquities, and scenery to the public that travels. This may not be the highest kind of fame, as many critics have observed, but it does much to make a writer truly live. The *French and Italian Note-Books*, published posthumously, supplement the interpretation given in the romance, afford interesting glimpses of important people, and are very serviceable to the student of Hawthorne. It is scarcely wise, however, or fair to their author, to treat them as great contributions to literature—a remark which ap-

plies to the *American* and to the *English Note-Books* as well.

In June, 1860, Hawthorne returned to America, less out of touch with it than Cooper after an exile of equal length, but certainly out of touch with the times. He took up his residence at Concord and watched the inception of the civil war with a heavy heart. He was loyal to the Union, but was despondent of the result and avoided talking politics, although he did write on the subject in *The Atlantic Monthly*. He made several attempts at fiction, but without success. His mind was unsettled, his health was breaking down, and it was afterward plain from *Septimius Felton*, *Dr. Grimshawe's Secret*, and the fragmentary *Dolliver Romance* that his artistic power had ebbed with his physical strength. They could not well be devoid of his mysterious charm, but might have remained in manuscript without serious loss to the world. The death of their author could not but be a loss. In 1864 his health declined rapidly, and on May 24, while on a visit to the White Mountains with ex-President Pierce, he died suddenly at Plymouth, New Hampshire. He was buried in Concord, and his grave, with those of Emerson and Thoreau, attracts the reverent homage of lovers of literature.

So much eulogistic criticism has been devoted to Hawthorne and his works that there is practically nothing to add to it, while any attempt to qualify it is likely to be regarded as rash and undesirable. After all, there is little reason to dissent from the most thoroughgoing of his eulogists, save, perhaps, on one point. A finer moral nature than Hawthorne's, a more intrinsically winning, if



evasive personality, a more authentic and unique genius it is impossible for any people to hold up to admiration. It is open to doubt, however, whether the admirers of the man and his works—and the term includes almost all who know them—have not as a rule overemphasized the sheer intellectual force of the man and the philosophical depth and scope of his artistic creations. Hawthorne's letters and note-books reveal a man of noble nature and of subtle imagination, but do they reveal the thinker, the seer, that many persons have discovered in them? Hawthorne's tales, sketches, and romances show a wonderful knowledge of the human heart when it is writhing under the curse of sin, struggling with love of self or of others, contending with strange desires, or pulsing evenly under the influence of sweet natural affections; but with all their imaginative analysis do they convince us that their author "saw life steadily and saw it whole," that his vision was as wide as it was deep, that as a creator of characters and a painter and expounder of life his place is with the master minds of literature? Probably many persons will answer that they never thought of making such claims for him, but the obvious reply is that in praising his special qualities they often use language that is applicable only to the very greatest dramatists and novelists.

When emphasis is laid upon Hawthorne's unique position in literature, the critic occupies decidedly safer ground. He is unique among American authors in his ability to throw a glamour over the past and to become the spokesman of vanished generations. He is not a gorgeous scene-painter, he does not set heroic and picturesque

characters in motion, and hence is not a brilliant historical romancer of the type of Scott or Dumas; but when the pictures of the stern New England of the Puritan prime which he has given in *The Scarlet Letter* and in so many of his short stories are brought together and viewed as a whole, it appears that his admirers have not exaggerated when they have declared that in him alone has primitive New England found an adequate voice. And when they are viewed separately his little pictures are seen to be delicately wrought masterpieces. "The Gray Champion," "The Gentle Boy," the four "Legends of the Province House," and "Young Goodman Brown," to mention no others, almost suffice of themselves to put us in intelligent sympathy with the sombre generations about which Hawthorne dreamed and moralized.

He is also unique among American authors because he alone approaches the great masters in sustained artistic power of style and substance displayed both in elaborate and in slight works. Poe, in his poems and his best-known stories, displays sustained power, though scarcely of prose style; but Poe has no long, elaborate romances to his credit. The body of Irving's work is not so sustained as that of Hawthorne in point of substance; while Cooper, great as are his merits, is a notoriously unequal writer. Hawthorne is unequal also and only rash admirers will claim that he at any time rises to tremendous heights, but his least impressive performances bear the stamp of his genius. His style may seem a trifle old-fashioned, it may not be sufficiently varied and flexible, or individual, but to deny its remarkable charm and adequacy would be hypercritical. His stories

and sketches may be often slight in substance, and may show no great technical skill in construction, they may seem to indicate that their author was overfond of moralizing, of allegorizing, and of trifling with quaint notions; but at their lowest we read them with pleasure, at their highest with grateful admiration, and we discover in them few or no traces of other writers. So it is with his elaborate romances. We may or may not rank *The Marble Faun* far below *The Scarlet Letter*, but we cannot well deny that the former book could have been written only by the author of the latter, and that when all allowances are made, it is worthy of his genius and representative of his personality. Of no other American writer, whether of prose or verse, does it seem permissible to affirm such uniformly high excellence as it does of Hawthorne.

It is a commonplace to affirm that Hawthorne is unique among American authors on account of the peculiar qualities of his imagination. But is it not equally true to say that in this respect he is unique among the authors of the world, and is the term "unique" strictly applicable? Hawthorne stands by himself among writers, but so in his way does Poe, and so do other great creators in other literatures. It is better, then, to say that Hawthorne differs from most other American imaginative writers, save Poe and Whitman, in being a genius of his own kind, a statement which at once places him and them among the original, underived geniuses of the world's literature. Hawthorne's genius is so individual that the term "Hawthornesque" has a fairly definite connotation. We hear or see the term and we at once think

of a romance or tale that blends the elements of mystery, pathos, gentle humour, subtle fancy, moralizing symbolism, penetrating morbid psychology, sympathy with the past—but why attempt the impossible task of exhausting the list, of resolving the irresolvable? Whether or not these undefinable idiosyncrasies of choice and treatment of subject that we call “Hawthornesque” are to be unreservedly admired, is another matter. Matthew Arnold, while admitting that Hawthorne’s literary talent was “of the first order,” was inclined to think that his subjects were not “of the highest interest.” On the other hand, intelligent persons have contended that Hawthorne as an imaginative writer is surpassed only by Shakespeare. The latter view is either grossly exaggerated or is based on a special definition of the term “imaginative,” but under any definition Hawthorne’s genius must be pronounced authentic and individual.

His tales and sketches seem to be characterized by grace and fancy and quiet humour and a fondness for allegorizing rather than by strength and imagination and hearty humour and a sense for the actual, the inevitable. There are stories of great power, such as “Ethan Brand,” but some feel that in the weird, the terrible, the ineluctable Hawthorne is a less impressive master than Poe. He has, moreover, neither the firm art of Maupassant nor the exquisite art of Daudet. But he has a charm and a subtlety and a purity that are all his own and that make his collections of stories a perennial delight. There is probably no other modern story-teller who goes straighter to the heart or who has won more friends. Nor do many other story-tellers offer a greater variety of subjects appropri-



ately treated. The lovely symbolism of "The Artist of the Beautiful," the subtle novelty of "The New Adam and Eve," the delightful irony of "The Celestial Railroad," the playful humour of "A Select Party," the gruesome imagination of "The Christmas Banquet," the blended grace and moral profundity of "The Threefold Destiny," recur to our minds and make some of us resent any attempt to rank the stories of Hawthorne below those of any other writer. And when the tales just named are added to those already mentioned, we perceive that the list of his admirable creations in this difficult form of fiction is not nearly complete; yet, after all, he has neither envisaged life steadily and clearly nor entirely abandoned this actual world for one "out of space, out of time."

With regard to his four great romances, it is easy to agree with the popular verdict that ranks *The Scarlet Letter* as his supreme creation. It alone has a subject that makes a universal appeal. The misery entailed upon Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale in consequence of their sin, and the malignant revenge for his own wrongs taken by Roger Chillingworth, must profoundly impress every reader endowed with even a modicum of imagination. Yet the romance has not won for itself a very wide currency outside the English-speaking peoples. This fact may be partly due to its setting, primitive New England not being within the mental horizon of many foreigners. Perhaps, however, certain features of Hawthorne's treatment of his universal subject have limited the appeal of his romance. Such a theme would seem to demand complete simplicity and concreteness of treatment; yet Hawthorne would not have been himself had

he not treated it, to a certain extent, symbolically. His imagination played around the scarlet initial; it also played around the fantastic Pearl and her relations with her parents. Perhaps a slighter infusion of the "Hawthornesque" would have made the most imaginative American romance one of the indisputably greatest books of the world.

*The House of the Seven Gables* must always make a less universal appeal than *The Scarlet Letter*, yet it may easily make a more personal appeal to many readers both through its more modern setting and characters and through its less harrowing, though still deeply impressive moral. Probably in no other work does Hawthorne so thoroughly succeed in fusing charm and power. There is seemingly as much true pathos in the description of the old house and the old maid as can be found anywhere else in modern literature. Young Phœbe is exquisitely pure and fresh, and Uncle Venner is a genuine original. Yet the daguerreotypist is scarcely a personage worthy of his creator, and we may agree with Mr. Henry James in feeling that somehow Hawthorne did not make of his romance all that he had intended. Perhaps the physical tragedy represented in Judge Pyncheon's death is not successfully blended with the moral tragedy represented in poor Hepzibah's daily life.

For *The Blithedale Romance* it is hard to feel the love one yields willingly to *The House of the Seven Gables* or the admiration one yields willingly or unwillingly to *The Scarlet Letter*. It contains memorable scenes, such as the search for the drowned body, which Hawthorne based on a real incident, and one of its characters, Zenobia, in

whom most people persist in discovering resemblances to Margaret Fuller, is perhaps Hawthorne's nearest approach to a flesh-and-blood creation. Yet most of the other characters seem either thin or turbid, and the account of the community life impresses one as being the result of an incongruous mixture of realistic and romantic methods of treatment. It remains, however, the chief literary memorial of Brook Farm and it has never lacked warm defenders and admirers.

Probably the most popular of the romances is *The Marble Faun*. Nowhere else is the evasive quality of Hawthorne's genius so prominently displayed, nowhere else is he so delightfully tantalizing, whether in his characters or in his plot. Donatello, Miriam, Hilda, are personages that afford opportunities for endless discussions, for sympathetic interpretation, for rhapsodical admiration. The pure, ethereal Hilda seems especially created to stimulate sentiment, or sentimentality. The descriptions of Rome and of the castle and beautiful environs of Monte Beni please those who are acquainted with Italy and fascinate those who are not. No wonder, then, that the romance has been popular, and that its vogue has declined but slightly, if at all. Yet at the time of its publication the fact that it was not brought to a clear-cut conclusion irritated many readers, and the number of such disappointed persons is perhaps almost as great to-day, although the romance is probably less in demand as a story provocative of interest. Whether Hawthorne could have put an end to his reader's perplexities and preserved, at the same time, the artistic tone of his book is doubtful, yet it is also doubtful whether his theme was worthy of

the elaboration he gave it. Some critics have thought that his strength deserted him when he deserted his native soil of New England; but this may be only a convenient hypothesis to explain a disappointment due to a variety of causes. There is no need, however, to dwell upon the matter. *The Marble Faun* seems on the whole thinner in substance, less compelling and attractive on a re-perusal, than either *The Scarlet Letter* or *The House of the Seven Gables*; but a large number of readers are content to enjoy it without making invidious comparisons.

Lovers of irony ought to dwell frequently and fondly on the career and fame of EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809-49). Few artists in their aspirations have ever been more detached from the actualities of this tangible world; few in their lives have ever been more bespattered with its slime. The posthumous fame of few writers has grown more steadily and clearly; few representatives of a nation's best achievements have been more maligned, misunderstood, or else grudgingly acknowledged by a majority of their countrymen. Since his death Poe has had more influence upon the world's literature than any other American, and his primacy among American authors has become practically a commonplace for most foreign critics. This primacy has been pronounced "perverse" by American critics endowed with the courage requisite to scolding a continent. On the other hand, Poe has never lacked affection and homage from a respectable minority of his countrymen, his works have been better and better edited, and his fame has grown until it is now possible to assert his supremacy in American literature without running the risk of being vituperated. In view of all that has been said, it will be



evident that disinterested criticism of the man and his writings is not yet to be expected from any of his countrymen; but it should be possible to steer a middle course between praying to him, like at least one Frenchman, and damning him, like more than one New Englander.

Poe was born on January 19, 1809, in Boston, where his parents were acting in the Federal Street Theatre. On the paternal side he was descended from good Maryland stock; his mother was an Englishwoman, by name Elizabeth Arnold. Both father and mother died before the end of 1811, and Poe, with an elder brother and a younger sister, was left without natural protectors. The family had been stranded in Richmond, and there they secured kind friends, one of whom, Mrs. John Allan, wife of a well-to-do tobacco merchant, being desirous of having a child to care for, adopted Edgar. He was brought up in considerable comfort, and in 1815 was taken to England by the Allans, who remained there five years and sent him to school at Stoke Newington. On his return to Richmond he was again put to school, where he showed capacity for the languages and for verse-writing. He was also distinguished as an athlete and, like Byron, was a remarkable swimmer. It is more important to notice that he gave early evidence of reserve, of intensity of feeling, and of a tendency to neurasthenia. He became deeply attached to the mother of a schoolmate, and when she died visited her grave nightly for months.

In February, 1826, he matriculated at the University of Virginia, which had just been founded by Jefferson. There were many dissipated students with whom Poe associated and to whom he lost heavy sums of money. He

studied and read, however, and on the surface had a fair academic record. Mr. Allan, on learning of the debts, refused to pay them and withdrew Edgar from the college. One hesitates to censure the foster-father, yet one cannot but suspect that in the pleasant society of Richmond the boy had not been exactly fortified against temptations to which his inherited weaknesses made him peculiarly liable. One wonders what effects might have been produced by a little earlier precaution and later forbearance. As it was, Mr. Allan disgraced Edgar in the latter's own eyes by forcing him to leave his debts of honour unpaid. He also placed him in his own counting-room, certainly not an ideal treatment for a youth who was devoted to lonely rambles in the mountains around the university. The result might have been expected. Poe left Richmond secretly, got to Boston in some way, and there, on May 26, 1827, enlisted in the army. He paralleled curiously the conduct of Coleridge, a poet not without other influences upon him, by enlisting under an assumed name that preserved his initials—E. A. Perry.

While stationed at Boston he published his first volume of verse, the anonymous *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, one copy of which now brings a sum sufficient to have supported the poet and his child wife for several years. In the fall of 1827 he was transferred to Fort Moultrie, near Charleston—the change bearing fruit later in the setting of "The Gold Bug." Then he served at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, where a reconciliation took place with the Allans, or rather with Mr. Allan, whose wife died before Poe reached Richmond. A substitute was provided and an appointment to West Point secured,

Edgar entering the institution on July 1, 1830—at too late an age, one would think, and with too wayward a career behind him to warrant great hopes of success in the service in spite of his previous promotion to the post of sergeant-major. As if to make these hopes slighter, he had published at Baltimore, in 1829, his enlarged and acknowledged volume of verse entitled *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems*.

At first the new cadet conducted himself creditably, but he soon grew restless and wished to resign, a step to which Mr. Allan naturally would not consent. The young man then neglected all duties, was court-martialed, and dismissed in January, 1831. He went to New York and published a volume entitled simply *Poems*, which won him no consideration, although it contained "Isra-fel" and "To Helen." The glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome would do to dream about, but it was the crude, hard-headed, practical America of the Jacksonian era that confronted Poe. Mr. Allan had married again, and nothing except repulse was to be looked for in that quarter. Poe had youth, brilliant genius, ambition, considerable culture, and a varied experience in his favour; but he had against him inherited and developed moral weakness, abnormal sensitiveness, the conviction that he had been hardly used, and an environment unpropitious to his temperament. It seems clear now that the balance was against him from the start, a fact which should make his critics more sympathetic and charitable, although it does not warrant his admirers in wilfully shutting their eyes to the discreditable and distressing features of his sad career.

From New York Poe went to Baltimore, where his father's widowed sister, Mrs. Clemm, and her daughter, Virginia, became truly his guardian angels. He tried hard to get steady work, but failed, his first bit of good fortune coming in the shape of a prize of a hundred dollars won in October, 1833, by his story, the "MS. Found in a Bottle." His poem "The Coliseum" would have won a smaller prize if the same contestant could have carried off both. Among the judges was the romancer John P. Kennedy, who helped Poe in various ways, chiefly by recommending him to assist Mr. Thomas W. White in conducting the newly established *Southern Literary Messenger*. Poe took practical charge of this magazine in 1834, and remained in Richmond until January, 1837. He made the periodical famous by publishing in it some of his best stories and by criticising the works of contemporaries in an inurbane and often freakish fashion, but with a power and a frankness that were highly beneficial in that age of absurd provincial eulogy and self-complacency. But the man who could control the imaginations of other men could not control his own appetites; the severe *ensor litterarum* was a lax *ensor morum* when his own conduct was involved. He married his fragile young cousin, Virginia Clemm, and he continued to drink at intervals, in spite of the remonstrances of his kind employer. It became impossible for White to retain him, valuable though he was; and Poe sought employment in New York, leaving the magazine he had made famous to continue a creditable existence of over twenty-five years as an organ of the far from prolific writers of the South.

In New York the small family was supported by Mrs.



Clemm, who took boarders. Poe seems to have filled gracefully his sorry rôle of the man of letters out of employment and to have been less intemperate, if not fairly free from his vice. This may at no time have led him to deep potations, so easily was he stimulated beyond control. He could secure no fixed employment, however, and after publishing as a volume his longest story, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, he removed to Philadelphia, then an important centre for periodicals. Here he remained with his wife and mother-in-law for nearly six years, leading the precarious life of editor, contributor, and hack writer. His main editorial connection was with the fairly important *Graham's Magazine*, but by the spring of 1842 his habits had lost him this post. He was possessed with the notion of establishing a magazine of his own, and more than once issued a prospectus that led to nothing. Yet he was far from failing in his true career of imaginative story-teller. His *Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque* were collected in 1839, and to this Philadelphia period are to be assigned such masterpieces as "Ligeia," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," and "The Gold Bug." The public, however, was more interested in his article on "Cryptography," in his solution of various cryptograms, and in his correct prediction of the plot of *Barnaby Rudge*. This interest was legitimate, for Poe's analytical powers were marvellous, yet one cannot but regret that more interest was not shown in what are probably the most strangely compelling prose compositions in any literature. Nevertheless Poe had won admirers both at home and abroad, and had made some true

friends who were ready to stand by him if he would only stand by himself. But he could not, in spite of, or, as he claimed, because of the failing health of his wife.

In the spring of 1844 another start was made in New York, where Poe secured employment on newspapers. In January, 1845, the publication of the immortal "Raven" in *The Evening Mirror* made him really famous. He then became associated with Charles F. Briggs in the management of *The Broadway Journal*. A quarrel ensued, and Poe, who had added to the unsavouriness of his reputation by savagely accusing Longfellow of plagiarism, was left in sole charge of the periodical. But by the end of the year it had gone the way of hundreds of other American magazines, and few contemporaries dreamed that, half a century later, students would pore over its dusty pages endeavouring to discover traces of its editor's handiwork. The end of 1845 was also marked by the publication of his collected poems, headed by "The Raven." Then the family removed to the suburb of Fordham, where they soon came to want, the poor young wife losing strength daily. It is impossible not to be harrowed at recalling Poe's sufferings, yet it is equally impossible not to resent his almost fatuous determination to make himself enemies. While he was striving to keep up the *Journal* he must needs try to palm off his "Al Aaraaf" as a new poem upon a Boston audience and then declare that such juvenile work suited such transcendentalists. While his wife was dying by inches, he must needs be composing his *Literati*—criticisms which in many cases dealt with contemporary writers who were too small for his notice, but not too small to injure his reputation.

Yet much as one must regret his deplorable weaknesses of every sort—he was as weak in his coquettish treatment of effusive poetesses as in his failure to control his spite toward successful writers of his own sex—one should find it difficult to denounce him. The thought of his wounded pride when the appeal for public charity had to be made; of his morbid grief when the wife he had idealized died, exactly two years after the publication of “The Raven,” with its foreboding refrain; of his nervous organism racked by distress and illness, must banish from any sensitive mind the idea of reproach.

If Poe had died along with his wife, his personal reputation would have gained rather than suffered, although the world would have lost “Ulalume,” “Annabel Lee,” and “The Bells.” We should have been spared his moral deterioration, which showed itself not only in an increased propensity to drink, but in courtships which, on the whole, deserve to be characterized as maudlin. Yet it must be remembered to his credit that he made a brave effort to begin life over again by reviving his idea of a magazine, lecturing in its behalf, and developing his audacious cosmogonical speculations, which culminated in the impossible, but interesting *Eureka* (1848). It should be remembered also that feminine sympathy was absolutely necessary to Poe both as man and as artist; and it will always be permissible for his admirers to urge that if the marriage with his old Richmond sweetheart had taken place, his life might have changed for the better. Such a change was not for this world at least. He left Richmond for the North to arrange for the wedding; was found in Baltimore on October 3, 1849, lying un-

conscious in a liquor saloon used as a polling-place, a municipal election being in progress; was taken to a hospital and treated for delirium tremens; and died early on Sunday morning, October 7th. All kinds of conflicting accounts of the mode and causes of his death have been given, but it is at least clear that he died a miserable outcast, the victim of fortune and his own folly, at an age when, under happier circumstances, he might have been at the zenith of a magnificent career. Few deaths in the annals of humanity have been so distinguished by tragic pathos. It is no wonder that almost from the moment he died men began to discuss his career and to divide in their judgments of it. It is a wonder that the lapse of more than half a century has not imparted to their discussions a more charitable and less partisan tone.

What, now, did this man who was so unfortunate in his life accomplish in his art? Are those foreign critics right who maintain that he has made a more important and original contribution to the world's literature than any other American? Or are those of his countrymen who say with Lowell

There comes Poe, with his raven, like Barnaby Rudge,  
Three-fifths of him genius and two-fifths sheer fudge

nearer to the truth?

Perhaps before attempting to answer these questions it will be well to give some reasons for the discrepancy of opinion that is so perplexing. It seems plain that the enmities Poe provoked and his irregular, squalid life have prejudiced many Americans against him, not merely as a man but also as an artist. This prejudice has been



strengthened by the fact that the New England school of writers, which has been dominant in America for two generations and has in the main set the standards for American criticism, has not only never been able to divorce art from morals, but has laid preponderant emphasis upon morals. This has meant that the artistic principles for which Poe stood and stands—principles which may be roughly indicated by the phrases “worship of beauty” and “art for art’s sake”—have never been accepted by an important part of the American public. It is, of course, possible to enjoy a writer’s work and ignore his principles, but it has been difficult for Americans to do this because Puritanism and utilitarianism are more or less ingrained in them and in their literature. We have had constant occasion to remark that American authors write for the greatest good of the greatest number. Poe, on the other hand, did not write for the good of anybody. His writings are as nearly free from positive moral teaching as they are from impure suggestion. The American who reads to improve himself morally and mentally finds little to his purpose in Poe and much in Hawthorne and Longfellow. It is no wonder that he at once assumes that Poe is “queer” and more or less negligible. Nor should it be forgotten in this connection that Poe was not only committed to theories of art entirely antithetical to those held by the New England writers, but that he spent a large part of his time assailing both the theories and the persons of those exemplary authors. It is not surprising, then, that he has suffered for his temerity at the hands of readers and critics trained to venerate his rivals. Nor, finally, is it in the least

strange that the remoteness of his themes from common life should have limited his appeal to a people who, while possessed of imagination, have as yet done little to cultivate and refine it.

It is needless to say that foreign readers have been influenced by none of these considerations. They are not in the least surprised or aggrieved to learn that a great literary artist should have led a life not in accord with the canons of conventionality, and they have nothing to do with his personal quarrels. They are not puritanical and do not inevitably ask when they pick up a book what good they will derive from its perusal. They are fairly contented to be charmed or thrilled, and Poe, with the haunting melody of his verse and with his weird, ethereal, and terrible tales, has both charmed and thrilled them. In short, they have welcomed in their sophistication an original literary force. As Poe's native country becomes more sophisticated, it is likely that his originality and power will be more and more welcomed there.

Poe's work, then, has stood better than that of any other American writer the test of cosmopolitan approval. It has not stood so well the test of home approval, although, as we have seen, he did not lack warm admirers among his countrymen during his life, and although his fame has been so steadily rising in America that it is becoming possible for critics of standing to hold that Hawthorne's superiority to him is not a settled point. He therefore comes nearer than any other American to satisfying the demands made upon the author who claims admission to the limited ranks of the world-writers.

But what is the basis of his appeal to his devotees at

home and to the world at large? This question can be best answered by distributing his writings into the three categories of poetry, prose romance, and criticism, and endeavouring to determine how well he has succeeded in each division. If it can be shown that he has succeeded eminently in the first two, it will follow that, owing to the greater permanence of poetry, he has a better chance of appealing to remote generations than his fellow-romancers, and that his imaginative prose will give him an advantage over writers, like Emerson and Lowell, who share with him the rewards of poetry, but are scarcely likely through their ethical and critical writings even to maintain, much less to increase, their hold upon the world.

With regard, first, to Poe's work in verse, it is obvious that its small volume excludes him from the ranks of the greater poets. He is no more to be put on an equality with Tennyson than is Gray. Yet just as Gray is a true classic through the quality of his scanty productions, so is Poe. It is possible to maintain with Arnold and with Gray himself that the latter's odes contain reaches of pure poetry not to be found in the "Elegy"; it is possible to contend that "The Raven" is too factitious to be regarded as a poem of the highest merit; but it is not possible to deny that the two poems have enjoyed an unbounded popularity that has made them genuine classics. And just as Gray is for English-speaking peoples an unapproachable elegist, so is Poe an unapproachable writer of haunting, melodious lyrics of regret for lost loves and for luring, ever-escaping beauty. However narrow Poe's genius as a poet may be, it is plain that within his own sphere he is a more perfect artist than

any other American has been in any sphere. Probably no other poet writing in English has equalled him as a master of the refrain and of the device of parallelism. Nor has any one precisely reproduced his harmonies or surpassed them in their kind. His themes are few, but they appeal deeply to the hearts of many readers, and Poe has developed them with insight, with sure tact, and with a strange, haunting imagination that has profoundly moved the imaginations of others. His influence upon latter-day poetry, with regard both to melody and to colour, has been very strong. He has also influenced, less beneficially, perhaps, the substance of modern poetry and the artistic theories of its votaries.

In other words, what Poe did he did almost perfectly and with the maximum of effect. He was not absolutely original, of course—the influence of Shelley, Coleridge, and Mrs. Browning, to name no others, can be traced in his work—but he was markedly original in comparison with any other contemporary save Emerson. A few years later Whitman displayed an originality broader and more specifically national, but he was not an artist as Poe was, nor has his influence upon other writers been thus far nearly so marked, at least in matters of technic. Whatever we may say, then, with regard to the narrowness of Poe's lyric vein and to the remoteness of his themes from the highest and broadest interests of life, we cannot deny to him as poet the power and influence that accompany perfect mastery of an art, or rather of one of its phases. The dramatic interest and weird intensity of "The Raven," the undefinable emotional appeal of "Ulalume," the varied melody of "The Bells,"



the romantic charm of "Annabel Lee," the subtle harmonies of "Israfel," "To Helen," and "To One in Paradise," and finally the melodious pathos of "The Haunted Palace" appear to be Poe's title-deeds to unending fame.

Turning now to Poe's work in fiction, let us endeavour to determine how much of it seems to have permanent value. His only attempt at a sustained story, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, is not without merit, but has never impressed many readers and plainly does not rank high in its class. His numerous extravaganzas must be set aside also, for Poe was seldom successful when he aimed at humorous or grotesque effects. It is on the body of sombre, haunting, ethereal, tragic, and morbid tales represented by "Shadow," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Eleonora," "The Masque of the Red Death," and "The Black Cat" as well as of the pseudo-scientific and ratiocinative stories represented by "Hans Pfaal" and "The Gold Bug" that Poe's fame as a writer of prose fiction must rest. In other words, just as he is not a poet of sustained power, so he is not a romancer of sustained power. He is as little to be ranked with Scott or Cooper or Hawthorne in prose as with Byron or Shelley or Tennyson in verse. He is to be ranked with the great masters of the short story, with Boccaccio and Maupassant, and it is plain that in literary influence and effectiveness his tales, taken in their entirety, entitle him to a high and unique position among romancers. Few or no other writers grip their readers as Poe does. In this particular, this seizing and holding quality of his work, his art is little, if at all, short of wonderful. He has no elaborate

sustained romance or novel to his credit, he has created no great characters, he does not know the human heart as Scott and Hawthorne do, nor does he make such an appeal to it, he has comparatively little humour, he has not even, except in his very best romantic tales, a remarkably good prose style; but he has originality, range, and intensity of controlling power to such a degree that one almost forgets his limitations. Few or no writers of fiction have clearly surpassed him in presenting a tragic situation—witness “The Cask of Amontillado”; or in analyzing a warped character—witness “William Wilson”; or in making the impossible seem true—witness the “Descent into the Maelstrom”; or in unravelling a mystery—witness “The Purloined Letter”; or in casting a weird or a lovely glamour—witness “Ligeia” and “Eleonora.” In view of such a range as this it seems idle to speak of Poe’s genius as narrow; few will deny his originality, or at least his mastery in what he tried to do; and probably no one will dispute his influence upon modern fiction, although many will doubt whether it has been beneficial.

That modern decadents have been influenced by Poe’s work, but more especially, perhaps, by his theories of art, may be admitted. He does not deal with the highest things. He does not give us a consistent criticism of life or aim at making us better or wiser. But he does make us see and feel the beautiful, the mysterious, the terrible in a way that profoundly affects our emotions. There is room for art such as his in any age and among any people. It is a genuine, not a meretricious product of human genius, it is extremely rare, and to belittle it is, to say the least, uncatholic on the part of any critic.

The miscellaneous prose works of Poe, including his *Eureka*, his letters, his lectures, essays, and other critical writings of whatsoever form, are important to the student of his art and of his mind as well as to the student of American literature during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Their intrinsic value, however, is comparatively slight. *Eureka* appears to have no scientific or philosophical merits, but is plainly the product of a daring and brilliantly analytic mind. The lecture on "The Poetic Principle" has been seriously praised, but its merits are more than neutralized by its author's narrowness and arrogance. The reviews and other critical estimates of his contemporaries are as a rule either too severe or too eulogistic. Yet it is clear that Poe, in the thirties at least, had higher critical standards than any other American who was doing journeyman work in the magazines, and that he did good service to his countrymen by scourging the mediocre and bad authors who were being ludicrously overpraised merely because they happened to be Americans presumably engaged in ushering in the much desiderated national literature. Yet although Poe was, perhaps, the most useful critic of his time, and although his mind was so acute that he might have made himself a noteworthy critic, metaphysician, or scholar, it seems idle to imitate his more extreme admirers in discovering in his lucubrations matter for wonder and hyperbolic praise. On the other hand, it is unfair to infer from his blunders and from his familiar references to things of which he probably knew little that he was a mere charlatan. His range of knowledge was wider than is sometimes supposed; and he had enough sheer

vigour of mind to excuse many more solecisms than he can be shown to have committed.

But now having briefly reviewed his work in its various categories, how are we to rank Poe as a writer? He is an important and original and truly classic poet, yet we have seen that we cannot well pronounce him to be a great one. He is a potent writer of romance, although he has no sustained masterpiece to his credit. He is an acute but unbalanced critic, a strong intelligence but not an important force in the world of thought. If these statements contained the whole truth, he would plainly not be an author of supreme or even exalted station. But it is equally plain that no other American author occupies, in the eyes of either foreign or some native critics, such an eminent position, and that Poe is the only American whose influence upon literature at large has been even fairly considerable. By reason of this influence, of his originality and range, of his intense power and his mastery of the forms of art he attempts, and of his double appeal as poet and romancer, his position is one of secure though not superlative eminence, and his admirers are not "perverse" when they assert his primacy among American writers. Yet it should not be forgotten that the genius of Cooper is more robust than his, that Whitman's is more autochthonous, Emerson's more ideally stimulating, and Hawthorne's more sympathetic and humane. The American who prefers any or all of these writers to Poe is not so destitute of the critical faculty as some foreigners suppose, while the foreigners that assert Poe's superiority have more reason on their side than is admitted by most Americans. The task of assigning relative ranks to authors is a very deli-



cate one—so delicate that many persons are inclined, erroneously but not without provocation, to regard it as a waste of time, if not as a piece of impertinence. Perhaps the safest conclusion in this vexed matter of Poe's standing in American literature is to admit that in view of his primacy on the Continent of Europe, his influence upon modern literature, his perfection as an artist in his two rôles, and his steadily increasing fame, he is the American writer that means most to the civilized world of to-day, and that probably has the best chance of maintaining, if not of increasing, his hold upon posterity. If this means that he is the greatest of American authors, it does not mean that he need ever be the favourite author of the American people. There is a devotion that proceeds from the heart and an admiration that springs from the mind. The one may belong to Hawthorne or Emerson, the other to Poe.

As we have already seen, the short stories of Hawthorne and Poe, while to modern readers the only significant work in fiction to be credited to the twenty years prior to 1850, by no means exhaust the work the historian of American literature must take into account. Besides the older romancers, Paulding, Mrs. Child, and others who were mentioned in connection with Cooper, there were at least a dozen new writers who belonged more or less to the school of romancers represented by that great writer and were endowed with sufficient talents to emerge into prominence. They were in no case great, and only one of them, Herman Melville, has attained the honour of being seriously considered by the present generation. Only four of these half-alive romancers will

require special discussion, but it should not be forgotten that most of them bear comparison not merely with the rank and file of modern novelists, when allowance is made for the advance achieved by the art of fiction in the past half century, but with their contemporary British brethren of the type of G. P. R. James. Indeed, they are in a sense more important than the minor British novelists because the literature to which they contributed stood in more need of the respectable services they had it in their power to render. And besides these orthodox romancers, as we may term them, there were writers of fiction influenced by transcendentalism and by German sentimentalism; there were others who were primarily humorists; and still others who made crude attempts to depict the actual life of the day, whether of the older portions of the country or of the rough border communities. In short, if few of the older novelists could rival their successors in securing serial publication and enormous royalties, their work, in both range and quantity, and in a few cases in quality, was not discreditable to a country in which the art of fiction did not date back two generations. Nor would it be entirely correct to say that they are unread. Such narratives of adventure as Dr. William S. Mayo's romantic tales of northern Africa *Kaloolah* and *The Berber* and such exemplary historical romances as the Rev. William Ware's *Zenobia* and *Aurelian* probably still have a limited circulation.

This is all that can be asserted even of the best of the numerous works of John Pendleton Kennedy (1795-1870), prominent as he once was both in literature and in politics. Born in Baltimore, Kennedy had fought in

the War of 1812, won success at the bar, and been elected to office before he wrote his first book of any importance. This was *Swallow Barn* (1832), a genial story of Virginian country life. Three years later he achieved true success in *Horse-Shoe Robinson, a Tale of the Tory Ascendancy*. This romance of the Revolution in the South is much more readable than most books of its period. Its brave, homely hero stands out with fair distinctness, and the adventures and the love scenes need cause only supercilious readers to raise their brows. It is easily superior to most other contemporary romances of the Revolution. Cooper in *The Spy*, and Simms in the long series of his Revolutionary stories taken in mass, surpass Kennedy; and doubtless later novelists who have treated the period understand it better than the creator of *Horse-Shoe Robinson*; but Kennedy's chief work is good enough to be more widely read than it is.

Not even the names need be given of Kennedy's remaining works in fiction, biography, and other categories, although he wrote almost until his death, in 1870. An exception may be made, however, in favour of his *Memoirs of the Life of William Wirt* (1849)—an orthodox biography which is also interesting. Yet if the nine volumes of Kennedy's works must remain in great part unread, it should not be forgotten that he was a writer of more than ordinary scope and culture, that he represented literature in a period and section not highly propitious to it, that he befriended Poe, and that he set his fellow-citizens a good example by combining politics and letters. The fact that he had written fiction did not keep him out of Congress, nor did the fact that he was a man

of culture render his brief services as Secretary of the Navy any less valuable to his country.

Less remembered even than Kennedy is the once popular author of tragedies and romances, Dr. Robert Montgomery Bird (1803-54). Of his three tragedies, *The Gladiator*, in which Edwin Forrest loved to appear, still furnishes schoolboys with pieces for declamation. Of his romances, the earliest, *Calavar*, and its successor, *The Infidel*, although readable in comparison with similar works of their time, are scarcely known to-day; yet they are interesting as showing how, in both romance and history, American writers of our period, feeling that they should choose new world subjects, instinctively turned to the Spanish conquest of Mexico as fuller of charm than the annals of their own country. It was, however, a distinctively American story that secured Bird most readers. This was his *Nick of the Woods* (1837), in which the terrible desire of vengeance aroused in backwoodsmen by the atrocities of the Indians was set forth with not inconsiderable power. In other words, Bird, giving the red man the sinister character attributed to him by the average American, furnished a foil to Cooper's idealizations. *Nick of the Woods* was, it would seem, a favourite book with boys until coarser and cheaper fiction of what is known as the "dime-novel" type drove it from the field. It is unfair, however, to associate a conscientious writer, whose romances were at one time read with pleasure in England, with melodramas and dime novels. Yet in spite of Bird's merits it is not likely that even the most zealous reprinter of old books will experiment with many of his.



Slightly better fortune has attended the most prolific and, on the whole, the most robustly talented of the followers of Cooper, William Gilmore Simms (1806-70), who, with the exception of Poe, was the most important man of letters produced by the South before the civil war. As a representative Southerner, embarrassed by the lack of a proper environment for literary work, yet achieving through his own energy a fair measure of success, Simms is more interesting in person than in his voluminous writings. He was born in Charleston, South Carolina, with none of the advantages accruing to the scions of the aristocracy. Scorning all advice to stick to his pill-boxes, he published several volumes of juvenile poetry. Neither in these nor in his numerous later attempts in verse is genius, or even fair inspiration, to be discovered, although a few short pieces of some merit have been appropriated by the anthologists. But as a journalist and a writer of fiction Simms soon displayed talents that secured him recognition. His first story of consequence, *Martin Faber* (1833), bore the impress of Godwin and Brockden Brown, but also showed that its author had the power of constructing a narrative that would carry its readers along. The next year, in *Guy Rivers*, following close upon the German Karl Postel, better known as "Charles Sealsfield," Simms described the coarse, turbulent, interesting life of the Georgia gold-fields, thus beginning a series of "Border Romances," forerunners, in a sense, of the local novels of half a century later. Although marked by large vigour, these romances do not represent their author at his best and need not be further discussed. He is nearly, if not quite, at his best in *The*

*Yemassee*, a story of colonial South Carolina and the Southern Indians, in which he proves himself a very worthy follower, though scarcely a rival, of Cooper. Immediately after this success he struck his best vein in a series of romances dealing with partisan warfare in the South during the Revolution. From *The Partisan*, of 1835, to *Eutaw*, of 1856, he flagged but slightly in his descriptions of thrilling adventures in camp and on battle-field, in forest and swamp. It was Cooperesque work, yet with a difference caused by the more luxuriant Southern setting and the variation in type of the hardy children of nature who lured their British foes into their swamp retreats. As is natural, these romances exhibit the merits and defects peculiar to bold, exciting, copious narratives. Simms was no more an artist in style or construction than Cooper, but his inventiveness and narrative power were so considerable that one need scarcely hesitate to recommend a few of his books not merely to boys but to mature catholic readers. Many of his romances, especially his attempts at fiction laid in past ages and in foreign lands, are, however, frankly impossible; nor are his numerous essays, biographies, dramas, or even his short stories, conscientiously as he laboured upon them all, worthy of special attention. He had had no training; he had been obliged to fight too many battles of life, to be able to make himself a polished man of letters.

But before the civil war came Simms had attained a success really remarkable, all things considered. He was the only Southerner who could live in his native section and still appeal to readers not merely in the North and

West, but, to some extent, in Great Britain and Europe. As editor of the revived *Southern Quarterly Review* he had encouraged literature and affected, not always in a happy way, political sentiment. Then the crash came. Almost, if not quite, his best romance, *The Cassique of Kiawah*, a story of early Charleston and the pirates, when published on the eve of the conflict, attracted so little attention that even the publishers of cheap literature have never thought to add it to their editions of his writings. The leaders of the war he had helped to bring on paid scant attention to his not always unwise attempts to instruct them how to conduct it. His large library was burned and he suffered other losses. And when as a shattered man he endeavoured, after peace was secured, to market again his literary wares, he found not only that he was disliked in the North on account of his intense political partisanship, but that the fiction he had to offer was entirely out of fashion. His was a life-story of genuine pathos and not a little tragic interest. His name has almost passed from the public mind; yet, if strength of character and affluence of talents demand recognition at least from a man's own countrymen, Simms deserves to be remembered.

Fortune, which seemed not long since to have deserted HERMAN MELVILLE (1819-91) as completely as Simms, has at last smiled again upon the former since a generation fond of narratives full of not too improbable adventure and of tropical glow has accepted, with at least fair complacency, the republication of books that won the warm commendation of Robert Louis Stevenson. The author of *Typee* was born in New York, and ultimately

died there, after a long period of seclusion. He had no special incentive save his own love of adventure to desert farming at an early age and go to sea as a cabin-boy. He then tried teaching, but shipped again in 1841, this time on a whaler bound for the South Seas. The cruelty of his captain caused him—with a companion, the Toby of *Typee*—to desert the ship as she lay in a harbour in the Marquesas. Then followed the adventures so interestingly told in *Typee*, which was published in 1846, soon after Melville's return to civilization. His book was very successful in both England and America, although some persons refused to give credence to it or to *Oomoo*, which immediately followed it. Marriage and literary success then transformed the adventurer into a fairly prolific man of letters. But as early as 1848 the quasi-speculative, chaotic romance entitled *Mardi* gave premonition of aberration and of the eventual frustration of a promising career. Melville's greatest achievement still awaited him, however, for after two other fair books of adventure he published, in 1851, his masterpiece, *Moby Dick, or the White Whale*. If it were not for its inordinate length, its frequently inartistic heaping up of details, and its obvious imitation of Carlylean tricks of style and construction, this narrative of tremendous power and wide knowledge might be perhaps pronounced the greatest sea story in literature. The breath of the sea is in it and much of the passion and charm of the most venturesome of all the venturesome callings plied upon the deep. It is a cool reader that does not become almost as eager as the terrible Captain Ahab in his demoniacal pursuit of Moby Dick, the invincible whale, a creation



of the imagination not unworthy of a great poet. In this uneven, but on the whole genuine, work of genius, Melville probably overtasked himself. He published several other books while, like his friend Hawthorne, attending to his duties in the custom-house, but nothing comparable to his earlier works. One, *Israel Potter*, deserved Hawthorne's praise because of its spirited portraits of Franklin and Paul Jones, but no revival of their author's fame will justify the republication of these productions of his decline.

One other author remains to be mentioned—the Rev. Sylvester Judd (1813-53), a native of Massachusetts, but for some years a Unitarian clergyman in Maine. He deserves remembrance not for his writings as a whole, since some of them at least, for example, the religious poem *Philo*, seem to lie beyond the reach of criticism, but for his transcendental romance *Margaret* (1845), which truly deserves a portion of its subtitle, “a tale of the real and the ideal.” The real parts of the book are to be found in its descriptions of natural scenery and of humble life in New England, to the accuracy and charm of which many qualified persons, including Lowell, have borne ungrudging, nay, enthusiastic tribute. Readers not New Englanders by birth may legitimately wonder at the warmth of this praise, but may be discreet enough to hold their peace. The ideal parts of the book are best understood by whoever has the patience to read it. They are certainly exemplary and worthy of transcendentalism in its best estate, but while following them may get one to heaven, it will be by way of chaos. Yet like his fellow-transcendentalists, Judd, in this novel and in its com-

panion, *Richard Edney* (1850), compels respect by his high motives, and neither he nor the other minor writers treated in this chapter should be completely eclipsed by the two brilliant geniuses to whose achievements it has been mainly devoted.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE POETS (1830-50)

#### I

IN a former chapter some attention was given to the Goodrich-Kettle anthology of American poetry, published in 1829, and to its colonial, uncritical characteristics. During the following twenty years nearly all the more important American poets—Longfellow, Emerson, Poe, Holmes, Whittier, and Lowell—laid the foundations of their fame and in many respects surpassed Bryant, the only poet of consequence who had become prominent during the preceding period. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the rise of poets of real distinction was accompanied by a marked decline of the colonial, uncritical spirit. This spirit is displayed in very full measure in two elaborate anthologies published in 1842 and 1849 respectively. The first was the well-known *Poets and Poetry of America*, edited by the Rev. Rufus Wilmot Griswold (1815-57), an indefatigable literary worker, whose unfortunate relations with Poe should not blind us to the value of his services to the struggling culture of his country, or to the interest attaching to his correspondence with the many authors that sought and received his aid. The second was a less elaborate, but still formi-

dable *Poets of America*, edited by the Rev. George B. Cheever, an energetic clergyman and voluminous writer. These clerical anthologists performed at least one service by passing over in silence a large number of the bards recruited by Goodrich and Kettle, but the number of unimportant versifiers of their own epoch to whom they allotted space due to genuine poets was distressingly large. Poe died in 1849, yet Cheever did not include a single one of his poems, while Griswold had found room for only three. In both collections Bryant, Halleck, Hillhouse, Percival, Pierpont, and Mrs. Sigourney, the leading verse-writers of the generation preceding, figured largely; in neither were Longfellow, Emerson, Whittier, or Lowell represented in proportion to the work they had done, although in this particular Griswold was much less at fault than his brother anthologist. Both compilers gave abundance of space to writers in whom it is as impossible for modern readers to discover merit as in the worst of the poetasters collected by Kettle. One reason for this is plain. Both were bent on improving American morals as well as on convincing the world that their native land had produced a great poetical literature. Hence they were inclined to admit selections that were chiefly remarkable for naïve innocuousness. It is evident, however, that this reason does not account for all their lapses. Many pieces were inserted by them because their own sense of æsthetic beauty was as rudimentary as that of the Poe they treated so cavalierly was developed and refined.

Of these verse-writers, known and unknown, major and minor, New England continued to furnish more than



her share. The leading magazines and journals of the period, such as the *Knickerbocker*, the *Mirror*, long the organ of Willis, and *Graham's*, edited by both Poe and Griswold, were in the main published in New York and Philadelphia, but contributions from every section were welcomed, and the local newspapers were hospitable to poetry of whatever sort to an extent now scarcely credible. And the poetry was read far and wide, with the result that ephemeral reputations were made by the ambitious rhymesters. But even by 1850, thanks partly to the critical onslaughts of Poe, partly to the native good sense of the people, and to the beneficent labours of time, six poets had distinguished themselves from the rank and file of the versifiers and had taken their places with Bryant. These were Emerson, Poe, Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, and Lowell, with the first two of whom we have already dealt. A few poets like Halleck had acquired a reputation which, although it was to be subject to considerable shrinkage, was nevertheless to be permanent. At least one, Nathaniel Parker Willis, was still in the ascendancy that brilliant versatility temporarily secures for its possessors.

Of the chief New England poets the oldest, with the exception of Emerson, whose verse it will be remembered remained long uncollected, was HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW (1807-82), the most popular of them all, one of the most popular writers of English verse in the nineteenth century. He was born of excellent stock at Portland, Maine, on February 27, 1807. Good books, good parents, good schooling, developed him early into an attractive, promising boy, and the free, uncramped life he led, especially

when he wandered among the wharves thronged by sailors or looked out upon the beautiful harbour of Portland, stimulated his native propensity to weave rhymes. In 1822 he entered the sophomore class at Bowdoin College, becoming a classmate of Hawthorne's. Here he received a solid, though not a wide training, read extensively, and wrote verses for a Boston magazine which were much admired. They were of no special value, although a late biographer seems to be correct in claiming that they showed surprisingly little affiliation with the romantic poetry then in vogue. But after all, Longfellow's nature was gentle, and in consequence more drawn to sentiment than to high-strung passion.

After graduation the normal desire of such a young man to lead a literary life had to be balanced against his father's natural desire that he should study law. Fortunately, he was given to understand that if he would fit himself for the position, he might fill the chair of Modern Languages, soon to be established at Bowdoin. His father furnished the needed money, and Longfellow sailed for Europe in 1826. He remained three years, devoting himself chiefly, like Irving, to Romance culture, rather than, like Ticknor, to German scholarship. He spent some time in Germany, however, but its influence, afterward strong, was at first outweighed by that of France and of her neighbours Spain and Italy. Besides studying diligently the languages and literatures of the lands he visited, Longfellow also imbibed much of the national spirit of each—in fact was a sentimental pilgrim as well as a student. His *Outre-Mer; a Pilgrimage beyond the Sea* (1835), when it was compiled from

magazine sketches, did not prove him to have been really more appreciative of the charm of the old world than Irving, any more than its included stories proved him to be Irving's equal as a writer of fiction. But it did show that Longfellow was of a newer, a more impressionable, not to say sentimental generation, and it chimed in with the desire for foreign culture so characteristic of that transcendental epoch, with which on its philosophical and visionary side he had practically no affiliation. If, therefore, it seems to the latter-day reader a thin, rather callow production, its temporary importance to Longfellow's immature countrymen should not be overlooked.

From 1829 to 1834 he led the routine life of a teacher in a small college, his difficulties being increased by the fact that the subject he taught was a comparatively new one. He translated and edited the text-books that were wanting, prepared lectures, wrote review articles on his special subjects, which practically covered Continental literature, mediæval and modern—in short, proved himself to be an exemplary teacher and man of letters. He also made a happy marriage, and in due time received a call to succeed Ticknor at Harvard. In April, 1835, he sailed with his wife to Europe, intending this time to devote himself mainly to German studies. He had attained the highest place in his profession, and in addition to the literary work already described had translated the *Coplas* of Manrique. It was a brilliant start for a young man of twenty-eight, but it scarcely indicated what his future life-work was to be.

England, Denmark, and Sweden first attracted the

travellers, Swedish poetry exercising upon Longfellow an influence not to be shaken off. In Holland his wife died, the event, as his biographers have maintained, proving a real turning-point in his life. His sweet emotional nature was deeply stirred, his sympathies were unlocked; he wrote to relieve himself, and he succeeded in relieving the feelings of others. He also yielded himself willingly to the charms of German romance on its sentimental side.

Late in 1836 he entered upon his duties at Harvard and did not give them up until 1854. They proved irksome in their pedagogical phases, and although he performed them faithfully, his unfolding career as a poet and a man of letters properly seemed more important. The college was still a somewhat primitive institution, but there was enough drudgery to be performed to excuse his complaints. On the other hand, the salary enabled him to live in comfort at the now celebrated Craigie House, and made hack work unnecessary. Cambridge, moreover, and the neighbouring Boston furnished him with congenial society; and a second marriage gave him a true helpmate and the comfort and joy of children. It was, in many respects, an ideal life for a man not endowed with a great intellect or a commanding will, but possessed of an exceptionally sensitive emotional nature.

Little more need be given in the way of biography, for Longfellow's life, save for the tragic death of his second wife by burning, was absolutely uneventful, and in so far in entire harmony with his gentle character. He visited Europe in 1842, the year before his second marriage,



and again in 1868, seven years after his second domestic catastrophe. He continued to publish volumes of verse at varying, but never long, intervals almost up to the day of his death, March 24, 1882, the most important period of his work covering the years that elapsed between the deaths of his wives. He took no such strenuous interest in public affairs as Whittier and Lowell did, but all his distinguished contemporaries loved him, and the great public, both in America and in England, yielded him more affectionate homage, perhaps, than he could have won had he been made of sterner stuff. Criticism, such as that of Margaret Fuller and Poe, scarcely alienated a single reader, and, although since his death his claims to eminence have been considerably shaken, his claims to affection and gratitude have been scarcely disturbed.

A complete catalogue of his books is as little needed as a recital of the simple annals of his domestic life; but a few leading volumes must be commented upon. In 1839 he published *Hyperion; a Romance* and *Voices of the Night*, the former a result of his German studies and of his sadness as a young widower, the latter a collection of poems containing the "Psalm of Life" and other pieces that insured his popularity. *Hyperion* was partly autobiographical and wholly sentimental. It attained a vogue that would be astonishing did we not remember the character of the period in which it appeared and especially of Longfellow's countrymen, to whom it was addressed. It may still be dear to unsophisticated youths, but their seniors who unwarily peruse it probably regard it as a sort of maudlin chaos. Even *Kavanagh*, a far from interesting romance of an impossible New England village,

published ten years later, seems beside *Hyperion* a model of orderly, well-verified narration.

The appeal made by *Voices of the Night* and *Ballads and other Poems* (1841) was better founded. Such poems as the "Hymn to the Night," "A Psalm of Life," "Flowers," "The Village Blacksmith," and "Excelsior" were not altogether dependent for their popularity upon their moral didacticism—dear enough to Americans of the period. They were sweetly sentimental, prettily fanciful, and admirably rhythmical—hence they are favourites with many readers to-day. The lines

I heard the trailing garments of the night  
Sweep through her marble halls,

while not introducing a lyric at all comparable in imaginative power and beauty to Shelley's "To Night," nevertheless do introduce a poem of true feeling and charm. "Footprints on the sands" are not in the least likely to attract the notice of shipwrecked brothers who keep on sailing, but the hearts of young men will continue, in all ages, to respond as that of Longfellow did to the Psalmist. Then, too, there were poems making a different appeal. "The Skeleton in Armour" will long stir lovers of rhythm, and the pathos of "The Wreck of the Hesperus" will not cease to make amends for its few artificialities. Other American poets had been didactic before Longfellow, others had written ballads, but none had so profited from the best foreign models or been so richly endowed with a refined taste and a true lyrical gift.

The comparatively mild *Poems on Slavery*, the pretty,

but unactable drama entitled *The Spanish Student*, that excellent compilation *The Poets and Poetry of Europe*, need not detain us. *The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems* of 1845 makes us pause, however, because in addition to its poems of exotic flavour, which continued the work begun in *Outre-Mer* of revealing the charm of Europe to starved American imaginations, it contained two lyrics, "The Bridge" and "The Day is Done," that have stood Longfellow in as good stead as anything else he ever wrote. Both are didactic or, at least, strongly marked by a moralizing tone, but this does not embarrass them or perhaps specially aid them in their appeal. They are full of a pensive sentiment that was genuine with Longfellow, and that almost every reader at one time or another shares with him. And this sentiment is expressed with great felicity, in simple stanzas that are sufficiently imaginative or fanciful to please even lovers of poetry, yet not so essentially poetical as to bewilder and alienate the average reader. In this felicitous, sentimental appeal to the general human heart Longfellow has scarcely been excelled by any other modern poet, and while he probably never surpassed in this respect the two poems just named, the note that makes them memorable is rarely long absent from his best work. He was too modest to have thought of himself when he wrote the famous stanzas that follow, but they obviously apply to him: •

Then read from the treasured volume  
The poem of thy choice,  
And lend to the rhyme of the poet  
The beauty of thy voice.

And the night shall be filled with music,  
And the cares that infest the day  
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.

It was in his forty-first year that Longfellow reached the zenith of his popularity with his pathetic idyll *Evangeline* (1847). His collected verses had contained but little that was specifically American, and had been couched in metrical forms which, although well handled, could not be specially connected with his name. When, however, he received from Hawthorne permission to use a subject which had in a general way attracted Whittier also, and when he made his own the hexameters he had encountered in Swedish and German narrative poetry; when, furthermore, he succeeded in writing a well-sustained poem of fair length, his countrymen felt that he had indeed accomplished something of which both he and they might be proud. They have continued to be proud of the poem. They read it in their schools, and it is good enough to deserve a large part of its reputation. The atrocious treatment of the Acadians might have furnished a more strenuous poet with the theme for a tragedy, but Longfellow was bound to make an idyll out of it, and his sweet heroine and his other well-drawn characters deserve to have their acquaintance made. The descriptive power displayed and the faculty of narration, even if derived from reading rather than from observation and native bent, are surely praiseworthy, and if the hexameters raise some qualms by frequently subsiding into a sort of undulating prose, this is not, for various reasons, a fit cause for wonder.



*Kavanagh* followed *Evangeline* in two years, and showed how the powers of characterization and narration displayed in the poem were reduced to a minimum when their possessor essayed to use them in a prose sphere unsuited to his genius. Then came the collection of poems entitled *The Seaside and the Fireside* (1849), notable for the dignified, if spun-out, "Building of the Ship," with its finely patriotic close, and for the tenderly pathetic "Resignation," with its often-quoted stanza of consolation—

There is no Death! What seems so is transition;  
This life of mortal breath  
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,  
Whose portal we call Death.

The simple faith which enabled him to pen this pronunciamento, so eagerly accepted by souls as receptive as his own, was both the theme and the occasion of his next work, *The Golden Legend* (1851).

This was intended as the second portion of a longer poem which should bear the name of Christ and should describe Christendom in the apostolic, mediæval, and modern epochs. The conception had come to Longfellow in 1841. He clung to it tenaciously until, in 1873, *Christus* was published. Its first part, *The Divine Tragedy*, a versified rendering of selected scenes from the Gospels, was finished in 1871; the third part, *The New England Tragedies*, consisting of "John Endicott" and "Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," had preceded this by several years, the first tragedy dating from 1857, the second from 1868. An offshoot drama, *Judas Maccabeus*, was written in 1871. It is impossible to speak of such a nobly

conceived and seriously executed work or series of works save with respect, although it is equally impossible not to feel that Longfellow was mistaken in undertaking a task requiring a genius commensurate with that of Milton. Fortunately, however, something better may be said of the first portion of *Christus* that was written and published, *The Golden Legend*.

This was based on Hartmann von der Aue's *Der Arme Heinrich*, and in it a mild Lucifer struggled for the soul of an uninteresting Prince Henry, for whom a sweet peasant, Elsie, was willing to give her young life. Its numerous divisions included a typical miracle play, a wine-bibbing brother in a convent cellar, a body of roystering monks in their refectory, a pious abbess in her nunnery—in short, gave an excellent picture of the Middle Ages from the conventional point of view. It has never ranked among Longfellow's popular works, yet it is inferior to none of them in charm and deserves ungrudging praise, if only for the sweetness of its versification and for its varied picturesqueness.

Much more popular was the Indian epic *Hiawatha* of 1855, full as it was of quaint folk-lore and attractive through its primitive hero and heroine with their musical names. A new metre—rhymeless trochaic tetrameters—borrowed from the Finnish *Kalavala*, and parallelisms and repetitions derived from the same source, gave a sense of novelty, while the subject was in at least one sense American. Grave and reverend seniors have enjoyed *Hiawatha*, and it has long been dear to youth; but one cannot help suspecting that it has owed more to the oddity of its rhythm than to its essential poetic

charm. Versified folk-lore is not *ipso facto* poetry, and it is hard to resist the belief that, however conscientiously Longfellow laboured over *Hiawatha*, he did not entirely escape being facile and factitious. Such a charge can scarcely be brought, however, against the next poem he gave to the public, the admirable *Courtship of Miles Standish* (1858), a performance more truly American than its hexameter companion *Evangeline* or *Hiawatha*, better conceived than either, fuller of humour, and more dramatic. The fiery Puritan captain, the arch Priscilla, the modest John Alden, rank deservedly among the most favourite characters in American literature, and it may be doubted whether their creator ever wrote a better elaborate poem than that which contains them. One reason for this is obvious. He was describing his own New England and, so to speak, his own progenitors.

Five years elapsed before Longfellow published his next book—the first series of his *Tales of a Wayside Inn* (1863). Such collections of stories in verse always suffer, because one is tempted to compare them with Chaucer's. Longfellow's suffers especially, because the characters who tell his often far from thrilling tales are curiously assorted, although drawn from the circle of his friends. This is less true of the first series, however, with its spirited ballad of "Paul Revere's Ride" and its vigorous "Saga of King Olaf," besides one or two good orthodox stories in verse, than it is of the second and third series, which followed about ten years later. Probably most readers excerpt "Paul Revere" and "King Olaf," and are thankful, leaving the other tales to their fate—a procedure which is both gracious and wise.

Of the remaining volumes there is little need to speak. The collections of miscellaneous poems, while containing some excellent pieces, did not enhance Longfellow's fame or take from it, although they made it clear that he was an admirable sonneteer. The religious dramas, as we have seen, were far from successful, and this was also true of the unfinished drama *Michael Angelo*, which, nevertheless, viewed merely as poetry, contained many passages equal if not superior in dignity of thought and expression to anything of Longfellow's prime. Indeed, Longfellow's most important work after his second wife died was his translation of the *Divine Comedy* (1867-70), undertaken, like Bryant's *Homer*, as a source of consolation. Although somewhat lacking in charm, this is considered by very competent judges to be the best complete translation in verse of the great poem, to which Longfellow had devoted many years of study. These judges may have been partial, but it is fairly certain that however much Longfellow may have failed with his facile rhymeless verse to reproduce the tense melody of the *terza rima*, he has had few rivals as a translator into verse, and that his renderings of lyrics such as Uhland's "The Castle by the Sea" must be counted as not the least of his services to the literature of his native tongue.

What now are we to say of Longfellow the poet?—for of Longfellow the gracious man none has ever spoken save in praise, and of Longfellow the prose-writer we have probably said enough. Is he the facile, unoriginal poet of some hypercritical moderns, the overpraised spokesman of a naïve, unsophisticated people and generation? Such a view, while not without apparent warrant,



seems far too sweeping. Neither in its component parts nor in its totality is Longfellow's work in poetry impressive enough to be termed great. His imagination was not powerful, his fancy was not exquisite, his intellect was not remarkably strong. Perhaps only in his command of rhythm did he approach the endowments not merely of the great masters of song, but even of poets of a secondary rank. And both in narrative blank verse and in the more singing lyric measures his deficiencies were marked. Equally marked was his dependence upon European culture for his inspiration, or else his indebtedness to British poets. Even in his more specifically American narrative poems, although the subjects treated and the metrical forms employed were novel, he does not now seem to have been a fresh force in letters. These statements are made not to discredit him, but to explain why depreciation of his work has been so common of late. Having made them, however, we should instantly remember that his New England rearing, his wide reading, his European travel, his impressionable nature, made it as natural for him to apply British and European poetical methods to his subjects as it was for Irving to apply the methods of British essayists and historians. That in neither the one case nor the other was the literary product of the first order of excellence was due in the main to the fact that neither writer was endowed with great genius. Both did what they could, and their work was, on the whole, excellent of its kind. Longfellow as translator, adapter, and in a less degree innovator, counted greatly in the development of his country's culture. He continued the work begun by Irving of revealing the old world to the new.

He wrote at least three fairly long American poems that have charmed readers of two generations. He composed several stirring ballads and caught not a little of the sonorous music of the ocean by the side of which he had lived when a boy. He gave one of the most pleasing pictures of mediæval life that modern literature contains. Last but not least, he contributed to literature a batch of lyrics of sentiment and reflection that have probably gone straighter to the hearts of more readers than any similar verses of any other modern poet. If such a benefactor of his kind is not granted love and praise, which need not be in the least uncritical, he will not be the chief loser.

The year of Longfellow's birth saw, on December 17th, the birth of the far more virile poet who shared with him the affections of the people of the free States—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER (1807-92). The early environments of the two men differed quite as much as their characters. Whittier was born in a house at East Haverhill, Massachusetts, that had been inhabited by generations of his Quaker ancestors, who had not been able to imitate the Longfellows in accumulating wealth and its advantages. His father was a small farmer, pecuniarily embarrassed, who could give his children little schooling and few books to read. The traditions and practices of the sect to which the family was devoutly attached did not make for culture, any more than did the primitive, laborious life of the community. Yet Whittier's early surroundings, afterward so faithfully described in *Snow-Bound*, did make for character; and it may be doubted whether the unflinching courage, the noble simplicity, the consistent

piety, the calm clear-sightedness that marked the poet of freedom would have been so well fostered had his youthful training been less rigorous. And after all, his career is by no means exceptional in its essential features. He is but one of many Americans who, having as youths read their Bibles and breathed the air of freedom, have as men made the world a better habitation for their fellows.

The journals of early Friends and the poems of Burns aided the Bible in developing Whittier's youthful bent for poetry, and their influences, supplemented afterward by those of Shakespeare and Scott, are to be seen from first to last in his writings. A sister sent some of his verses to a neighbouring newspaper, in which they were printed. Others followed, and then the editor—no other than William Lloyd Garrison—made a call upon his bashful young contributor, who could scarcely be persuaded to come in from the fields to see him. Garrison urged more schooling for the lad, who finally worked his way through a term at a newly established academy. By dint of teaching and other labour he managed to get a year's instruction; then, at the age of twenty-one, he secured editorial employment in Boston. Later, from his savings, he paid off a mortgage on the paternal farm and undertook its management. All the while he had been publishing verses and making friends and something of a local reputation. His father's death threw greater responsibilities upon him, and he resumed editorial work, this time in Hartford, only to find that his health, which had probably been weakened by his early hardships, required him to return home. He had meanwhile begun to take an interest in politics, had published an unim-

portant pamphlet of verse and had supervised the *Literary Remains* of his predecessor in the editorship of the *Mirror*, John G. C. Brainard. In less than a decade Whittier himself had achieved a greater and more permanent fame than this easy versifier whose lines on Niagara and other newspaper poems long seemed to his countrymen the productions of a true and early lost genius.

From 1832 to 1836 Whittier resided with his mother and a younger sister at Haverhill; then they removed to the village of Amesbury, where the poet was soon to make his permanent home. An admirer of Henry Clay and a stanch opponent of Jackson, he desired to support the one and defy the other in Congress. But the influence of Garrison led him to throw himself into the ranks of the abolitionists, and his pamphlet *Justice and Expediency*, published in 1833, made political advancement impossible. He did, indeed, serve a term in the Legislature, but his most important political work was confined to shrewd campaigning. He was more conservative and clear-sighted than his fellow-reformers, and did not, like many of them, reject political means for obtaining their great ends. In other words, he was a practical American who believed in the necessity of party organization. He was as down-right and honest, however, as he was practical, and his relations with the shifty politician Caleb Cushing, to whom he proved a veritable thorn in the flesh, are interesting and amusing. Nor was his task of legitimate campaigning without the spice of danger, for he had some experiences with the mobs that tried the courage of the new crusaders. His chief encounter of this sort was at Philadelphia, where during the year 1838-39



he edited *The Pennsylvania Freeman*, the printing-office of which was sacked and burned.

The bravery displayed by Whittier at this crisis was not in the least surprising in a man who, however delicate physically, had shown splendid moral strength and courage in his writings ever since he had determined which side he would take in the controversy that was beginning to divide the country. His earlier verses had been unoriginal and not specially promising, nor did his long poem *Mogg Megone* (1836), a story of King Philip's War, written in his twenty-seventh year, do much more than, as he afterward wrote, suggest "the idea of a big Indian in his war-paint strutting about in Sir Walter Scott's plaid." But he had already begun his series of antislavery poems, and it was not long before such ringing stanzas as those now entitled "Expostulation" were being circulated by the newspapers that dared to print such manly appeals. As was to be expected, his powers of expression did not develop evenly with his generous emotions and his insight into the principles of the cause he was supporting; yet his poems were popular and good enough to be collected, without his knowledge, in 1838. Another edition followed a year later, but his *Lays of my Home*, issued in 1843, was the first of his books that brought him any pecuniary returns. He needed these, for from 1840 his health forced him, except for one short period of editing, to reside at Amesbury for good. He published verses in the magazines, but this was a precarious source of income, and it appears that he was in comparatively straitened circumstances until the great success of *Snow-Bound*, in 1866, relieved him from strain.

The remainder of his simple home-keeping story is speedily told. The foundation, in 1847, of the antislavery journal *The New Era*, subsequently made famous by Mrs. Stowe's great novel, afforded him an organ until the eve of that civil war which he had helped to render inevitable. He wrote for it many of his best poems of liberty, as well as reviews and other articles, together with his most important prose work, *Leaves from Margaret Smith's Journal*, a faithful picture of life in Massachusetts at the close of the seventeenth century. This and his biographical sketches, while not without merit, are not sufficiently distinguished to warrant serious discussion of his work in prose. During the war he aided the Northern cause by lyrics, of which "Barbara Frietchie" was the most popular and probably the best, and he managed rather dexterously to avoid being false to his Quaker principles of non-resistance while remaining true to the principles of liberty and union he had upheld for thirty years. Toward its close, in 1864, he suffered the greatest loss of his life in the death of his sister, the accomplished Elizabeth Hussey Whittier. He never married, not, it would seem from the sweet poem "Memories" and from other sources of information, for want of promptings from his heart. He paid a beautiful tribute to his sister in *Snow-Bound*, and lived the remainder of his life with a fortitude based upon his simple faith and cheered by the love not merely of relations and friends, but of a large public not confined to his native land. He continued to write, publishing in 1867 his pleasant *Tent on the Beach*, in which Bayard Taylor figures; contributed to *The Atlantic Monthly*; and issued numerous collec-

tions of new verses and a revised edition of his writings. His period of genuine creative activity outlasted that of Longfellow for several years, but it is not necessary to take much account of his later volumes. It is proper, however, to record the fact that as soon as the war was over this bold spokesman of a party, who had written much that wounded and exasperated his opponents, put aside every uncharitable impulse and endeavoured to appease the evil passions that had been aroused by the contest. Thus he prepared for himself a mellow old age, the dignity and simplicity of which could not be disturbed by the homage he received from every rank and grade of society, from school-children up to the Emperor of Brazil, who translated one or two of his poems into Portuguese, using imperial prerogatives of taste in his selection. Viewed as a whole, Whittier's career seems to be entirely of a piece and unusually inspiring. He began his real life-work by espousing the rights of man; he closed it a few weeks before his death, at a New Hampshire resort, by paying a sweet tribute to friendship in some lines addressed to Oliver Wendell Holmes. A tender-hearted fighter for what he believed to be true and just—such was Whittier in both his life and his poetry.

The task of discussing Whittier's poems from the point of view of their literary merit has been much simplified through the poet's own arrangement of them. Omitting the *juvenilia*, the verses gathered since his death, and the last volume, appropriately entitled *At Sundown*, we have to pass in review about five hundred poems, many of which are in subject and treatment occasional only, and few of which have any pretensions to be re-

garded as products of sustained and careful poetic art. Of these the strictly religious poems and the "Songs of Labour and Reform" need not detain us, in spite of Whittier's undoubted piety and his equally undoubted sympathy with honest toil of whatever kind. The group entitled "Poems of Nature" should not be so summarily dismissed, although it can scarcely be shown that Whittier displayed remarkable talent in the sphere pre-empted by Wordsworth and Bryant. Not infrequently his cadences suggest those of the former poet, but this may be due to the fact that both often employed the same simple stanzaic forms. But although Whittier does not, as Emerson and Lowell sometimes do, almost transport us to the New England country they dearly loved, his poems of nature, which are pronounced by good judges to be faithful in their descriptions, make pleasant reading and occasionally, as in "Sunset on the Bear Camp," "St. Martin's Summer," and "A Summer Pilgrimage," are excellent of their kind. Quite as good perhaps are the pieces entitled "Our River" and "Revisited," which are classed among "Occasional Poems."

We are now left four large groups of poems, for *The Tent on the Beach* hardly requires to be mentioned again save for the fact that it contains an interesting portrait of Whittier from his own hand as well as the popular "Worship of Nature," the opening stanza of which will indicate its quality.

The harp at Nature's advent strung  
Has never ceased to play;  
The song the stars of morning sung  
Has never died away.



The group entitled "Ballads and Narrative Poems" includes many of Whittier's best-known pieces, such as "The Angels of Buena Vista," "Maud Muller," "Skipper Ireson's Ride," "Barclay of Ury," and perhaps a dozen others. They are appropriately simple in subject and treatment, show plainly the influence of Scott and other models, and display a considerable range of reading in the works of travellers and historians. Indian, Puritan, and Quaker subjects are frequent, and it may be fairly held that Whittier is entitled to a place with Hawthorne as a portrayer of the past of New England. He also holds a place with a very different author, Holmes, for the writings of both undoubtedly helped to dissolve the rigour of Calvinism and to make for religious tolerance. But when due allowance has been made for the strength and interest of many of these ballads, when the exceptional beauty of some of the stanzas of the poem entitled "Among the Hills" has been acknowledged, it would seem that we can scarcely pronounce the poetical merits of this important section of Whittier's work to be great. His ballads suggest facility rather than inspiration.

The "Personal Poems" contain tributes of uneven merit to persons in whom modern readers take great or mild or no interest. Sometimes, as in the case of the lines in memory of Charles P. Storrs, the ring of the poet's verses creates interest in their subject.

Thou hast fallen in thy armour,  
Thou martyr of the Lord!  
With thy last breath crying "Onward!"  
And thy hand upon thy sword.

One can understand how such a lyric nerved men and women to the great contest. Lines of a very different type of art commemorated the death of the British philanthropist Joseph Sturge, and although they remind us of Tennyson, they none the less honour most highly their author and their subject. But the great poem of this group, almost the only poem of Whittier's to which one can unhesitatingly apply this epithet, is the famous "Ichabod," written after Webster's betrayal of the hopes of the anti-slavery men.

Oh, dumb be passion's stormy rage,  
 When he who might  
 Have lighted up and led his age,  
 Falls back in night.

. . . . .

All else is gone; from those great eyes  
 The soul has fled:  
 When faith is lost, when honour dies,  
 The man is dead.

Years later, in "The Lost Occasion," Whittier gave utterance to thoughts and feelings that were more just to Webster, but his first poem will continue to be quoted and requoted because no finer lyric of restrained protest will be readily found in any literature. Along with a few other spontaneous poems of real power it almost makes one feel that perhaps Whittier's poetic impulses were deeper and truer than those of any other of his New England contemporaries, and that if he had been able to train himself as an artist he might have attained an eminence denied to him and them.

This spontaneous power is of course seen in fullest measure in the group of "Antislavery Poems," espe-

cially in the impassioned "Massachusetts to Virginia," in the moving "Randolph of Roanoke," in "The Crisis," "Moloch in State Street," and, among the specifically war-poems, in "The Watchers" and in "Barbara Frietchie." In such verses depth and sincerity of feeling and command of swinging measures are far more necessary than imagination or subtlety, whether of thought or expression. Whittier possessed the qualities requisite to the martial and partisan poet in greater measure than any of his contemporaries. That the "Tyrtæus of America" should have been the most distinguished of Quaker poets is at first blush a striking instance of irony; but when we remember how much the sect had suffered through one form of tyranny, we do not find it surprising that it should have furnished the world one of the best known poets of freedom.

Only one other group remains to be considered, that entitled by Whittier "Poems Subjective and Reminiscent." Of these, "Memories" has been already praised for its sweetness, and with it may be joined the charming stanzas "In My Schooldays." But the gem of the group, indeed the most artistic, sustained, and in many ways the most important of Whittier's poems, is the admirable idyll of New England rural life in winter, the several times mentioned *Snow-Bound*. It is not always safe to pay attention to comparisons of American literary productions with those of British writers, but it is entirely safe to say that the comparison so often instituted between Whittier's best poem and Burns's "Cotter's Saturday Night" is not only warranted, but not altogether in favour of the greater poet. Whittier's description in octosyllabics of

the snow-beset farmhouse and of the cheerful glow of cottage hearth and rural hearts is not marked by great imaginative power or by conspicuous charm of style; but it is marked to a notable extent by the charm of faithfulness of description as well as by that of sincerity of feeling. The lines that are devoted to the memory of his dead kinsfolk are not often surpassed in tenderness, and the portraits given are so clear that one regrets that Whittier did not oftener try his hand at idyllic and sustained narrative verse.

But even with *Snow-Bound* and the other poems that have been named to his credit, and with the level excellence of his verse, it must be admitted that Whittier does not deserve, any more than Longfellow, to be ranked as a thoroughly great poet. He accomplished more for humanity than many a more highly endowed artist in verse has done, he was in many respects a truly great man, but his own modest estimate of his poetry is nearer to the true one than that of his enthusiastic admirers. The technical defects which he frankly admitted in the beautiful "Proem" to the first general collection of his poems—stanzas which themselves to a certain extent contradict his overmodest admissions—were probably not due to his scant training and opportunities for culture, but rather to what was at bottom the chief cause of his failure to attain the heights of his art. He himself seems to have been conscious of what this cause was when in the same "Proem" he admitted that he had not

The seer-like power to show  
The secrets of the heart and mind.



In other words, while he had the intensity of emotion requisite to a great poet, he did not have the intellectual power and the imagination. Nor was he well furnished with that taste or artistic judgment which is sometimes found highly developed in men as far from intellectually great as Longfellow. For example, he frequently lacked the ability to be concise, especially in his reflective and descriptive poems. Like Longfellow, he was not a master of blank verse, of truly singing stanzas, or of haunting or powerful lines; unlike Longfellow, he was not, even in other respects, an adept in rhythm and diction, and he was often slovenly in his rhymes. But he was genuine, simple, wholesome, essentially national, and he had a great message which he delivered effectively. Perhaps some of his best work will suffer from the fact that future generations may not care to dwell upon such an unpleasant topic as slavery, but his well-earned fame seems thoroughly secure among his countrymen.

Considerable doubt has been felt and expressed with regard to the security of the fame of the third member of our New England group of important poets—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES (1809-94). His constant urbanity, his rarely flagging humour, his unfailing felicity as the spokesman of a friendly gathering, have not been questioned, and his supremacy as a conductor of imaginary table-talk is generally allowed; but the infrequency of his rises to "higher moods," the monotony of his measures and to a certain extent of his subjects, the fact that popular taste in the matter of humour is liable to undergo rapid changes, the further fact that much of his work is so local as to be provincial in the extreme, have suggested to his

more critical admirers doubts with regard to the permanence of a very large part of his poetry and prose. His writings have, of course, been gathered into an elaborate edition, not even his medical essays or his occasional magazine articles being omitted, but the amount of space accorded an author on the library shelves of one generation does not particularly overawe the next. No writer whom we have yet considered seems likely to live up to the expectations aroused by the first glimpse of his "Complete Works"; the question that must now occupy us is how Holmes stands the winnowing process that even readers partly contemporary with him are beginning to apply to his books. But a few facts with regard to his life must first be given.

He was born at Cambridge, August 29, 1809, the son of Dr. Abiel Holmes, an excellent divine and the compiler of an important *Annals of America*. On both sides he was of that Brahmin stock so well described by him in the first chapter of *Elsie Venner*, toward the stern theology of which he was destined to display as much animosity as his genial nature permitted him to cherish. He grew up and had most of his schooling in the quiet, academic village and then entered Harvard, graduating in that class of 1829 celebrated by him in his long series of reunion poems. The class had another poet in the person of Dr. Samuel F. Smith, who three years after graduating wrote the stanzas beginning

My country 'tis of thee

which, in lieu of a better, have supplied Americans with a national hymn. But Holmes was admirably fitted to

become the class laureate, for he continued to reside near the college and was steeped in its traditions. He had all the requisite humour and the sense of comradeship, and, as the group of survivors became smaller and smaller, his ability to express both the pathetic and the genial side of old age made him an ideal memorial and occasional poet. His class poems form an important section of his poetical works and are as nearly perfect as such things can be. Sometimes, as in the "Voyage of the Good Ship Union," of 1862, they rise into vigorous poetry; they rarely, if ever, fall below the level of pleasant reading.

During his student days Holmes, as was natural, wrote verses, some humorous, some sentimental, and several of these effusions were published in a college periodical the year after his graduation. The same year he wrote his popular "Old Ironsides," a plea for the preservation of the frigate Constitution which had played such a part in the War of 1812. A year later came "The Last Leaf," an almost perfect specimen of society verse at its best; shortly after "The Comet" showed what he could do in the way of a comic *jeu d'esprit*. He had previously warned his friends in "The Height of the Ridiculous" of the effects of his extravagant humour:

Ten days and nights, with sleepless eye,  
I watched that wretched man,  
And since I never dare to write  
As funny as I can.

Thus we perceive that by the time he was twenty-three Holmes had in considerable measure outlined the work he was born to do and had displayed remarkable dexterity in it. Good occasional verses, good society verses, good

broadly humorous verses—it is for these that many readers turn naturally to Holmes, the poet. He was to try other forms of poetry, as we shall see, and to be occasionally successful, but he was not to broaden into a large and versatile master of poetic utterance. He struck also his most important prose vein surprisingly early in the two papers entitled “The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table,” published in *The New England Magazine* at the end of 1831 and the beginning of 1832; but for such work maturity and experience were needed before mastery could be assured.

Holmes chose a career that gives its votaries both a broad and a deep knowledge of human nature. After graduating he studied medicine in Boston, and in 1833 went abroad, chiefly for studies in Paris. Returning a little more than two years later, he practised in Boston until 1847, when he was elected to the chair of Anatomy and Physiology in Harvard. He had previously held for a short time a like post at Dartmouth College. Meanwhile he had published his first volume of poems (1836), had married, and had begun writing verses for public dinners and similar functions. He had also gained prizes for medical dissertations and had published essays and lectures devoted both to the scientific and to the popular sides of his profession, to which he had devoted himself with assiduity. On abandoning practice he issued another volume of his poems, including most of his juvenile verses and the occasional pieces just referred to. In spite of the felicity of the lines “On Lending a Punch Bowl,” this collection did not promise much for a poet of nearly forty, especially as many of its pages were taken up with the rather long



"Rhymed Lesson," first entitled "Urania," which showed, as the earlier "Poetry, a Metrical Essay" had done, that in his more serious and sustained work in verse Holmes would not, from choice, abandon the prosody of his eighteenth-century predecessors. More than once in after-years he made an excellent and a warranted defence of the heroic couplet he loved so dearly and used so well; but no defence avails against the deleterious effects of semipoetical subject-matter and decided lack of inspiration.

From 1847 to 1882 Dr. Holmes filled his Harvard chair conscientiously and successfully, showing the breadth and poise of his mind by not opposing the changes that converted the small college of his youth into the great university of his old age. He continued to write on medical topics, at least one of his contributions being of acknowledged importance, and through excellent occasional verses he kept in touch with his fellow-physicians in a more intimate way. A long poem in couplets, *Astræa* (1850), scarcely won him many friends, but his local fame was increased by his Boston lectures on modern English poets, and he was to be counted on for class and dinner poems as usual, and for pleasant personal tributes when friends like Lowell and Motley went abroad. In 1857, however, a larger sphere of influence was created for him—almost providentially, it would seem, in view of the wisdom and humour he had stored up and of the great increase in the reading public capable of enjoying them. *The Atlantic Monthly* was founded as an organ of the new American literature, which had outgrown *The Dial* stage, and of the new social and political forces that

had been unlocked by the transcendental and antislavery movements. Lowell, the first editor, turned to Holmes for copy; the latter disinterred the "Autocrat" of twenty-five years before, gave it body by introducing characters, infused his own ripened spirit into it, and became the chosen friend and counsellor of thousands of readers both in America and in Great Britain.

From the publication of *The Autocrat* (1858) and of *The Professor at the Breakfast-Table* (1860) Holmes took his place definitely with the major New England writers, and continued to draw to himself the affection of his countrymen as one by one of his compeers dropped away. Finding a new and fortunate vein seemed to give him a literary energy not often discovered in men turned fifty. The *Professor*, while not so full of good table-talk as the *Autocrat*, had introduced more of the interest of a mild sort of fiction. It was not altogether unnatural, then, that Holmes should try his hand at a novel. *Elsie Venner* appeared in book form in 1861, a year which also saw the publication of another volume of poems, *Songs in Many Keys*. This probably helped to strengthen his reputation as a poet which had been legitimately enhanced by the poems inserted in the *Autocrat* and the *Professor*. "The Chambered Nautilus" and "The Deacon's Masterpiece" of the former volume are, indeed, high-water marks of Holmes's achievement in verse, the first being notable for charm of sentiment, the second for a rare combination of genuine fun-making and deep underlying meaning. That many readers enjoy the "One-Hoss Shay" without suspecting that it typifies the theological system in which the shrewd old deacon lived and

moved is certainly a tribute to Holmes's art as a satiric poet.

As a novelist he had not attained complete success. His rattlesnake-natured heroine did not fascinate in the right way, while her creator was too obviously the scientific physician, the shrewd observer of life, the humorist, and not sufficiently the trained narrator. Yet as a book of its own type Holmes's first novel is far from a failure. His pictures of New England village life are not perhaps realistic, but instead of being silly, like Longfellow's, they are delightfully amusing. Who that reads of it will soon forget the party given by Mr. and Mrs. Colonel Sprowle? Six years after *Elsie Venner* Holmes published another novel, *The Guardian Angel*. Again he chose an abnormal theme interesting to a physician, and again he showed himself to be a caricaturist, a satirist, a psychologist—anything, in short, but a novelist. But again he also wrote a book worth reading.

His later works require little comment. *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table* appeared in 1872, and eighteen years after, in *Over the Tea-Cups*, the still sprightly old man tried to please the children and grandchildren of his elderly admirers. He also collected at various times his miscellaneous essays, many of them worth reading but scarcely notable, and wrote not very successful biographies of his friends Motley and Emerson. In 1885 he tried a third experiment in fiction, *A Mortal Antipathy*, less important than either of its predecessors. Two years later, in *Our Hundred Days in Europe*, he described a tour in which he had been lionized in a charming fashion. He also issued four not very voluminous collections of his

accumulating verses, which did little either to enlarge or to diminish his reputation, and were increasingly filled with pathetic tributes to distinguished contemporaries who had left him behind in a world to which he accommodated himself almost with the elasticity of youth. The end came for him in Boston on October 7, 1894. The last survivor of his group, he was also its gayest and mellowest, and, on the whole, its most human member. Although almost as much a Bostonian as his own creation Little Boston, he was too broad to be circumscribed by the religious, political, and social prejudices of any city, State, or section, and was in every sense of the word a large-hearted American, always approachable even by bores. His entire life was beneficent; his old age was exceptionally beautiful and inspiring.

But we must return to the question with which we started—How do Holmes's works seem likely to bear the winnowing process that time loves to apply and the results of which critics, according to a popular view, love to chronicle and often attempt to forecast? As we have seen, there can be little question that from his poetry many delightfully humorous, sentimental, and pathetic pieces may be selected—enough not merely to supply the anthologists, but to fill a small volume. "My Aunt," "Dorothy Q.," "Meeting of the Alumni of Harvard College, 1857," "Questions and Answers," "No Time like the Old Time," the sonnet "Nearing the Snowline"—these and a score of other excellent poems may be added to those already named, in order to prove that, however limited his range, Holmes yields to no one as the laureate of a college, of a cultured city, and of graceful old age,



and to few as an urbane writer of familiar verse. But let us confess that to read through his *Poetical Works* has become something of a task, that the fun sometimes palls, that the longer poems are tedious, especially when, as in "Wind-Clouds and Star-Drifts," he attempts subjects requiring far more imagination and a greater command of poetic art than he could compass. We need not in the least deny him the title of poet—he is a very delightful one of the class of Prior, Gay, and Praed—but he is surely the least gifted of the New England group in the power and range of his emotional appeal.

With regard to the prose of Holmes the verdict is perhaps likely to be more favourable. His miscellanies, his biographies, his fiction, even the three later volumes of his table-talk series, may fail to attract the reader of no distant day, but it is hard to see how this enigmatical personage will be able to resist the blended humour and philosophy and poetry and friendly appeal of the *Autocrat*. The imaginary table-talk of Dr. Holmes of Boston ought to hold its own with the actual table-talk of even greater men of greater places. And if he lives by a whole warm-hearted, keen-minded book, will he not be more fortunate than many another writer honoured in his life by the love and homage of thousands of readers and subjected to the ordeal of a collected edition of his works? One would fain believe that some future readers of the *Autocrat* will be attracted to one or more of its companion volumes, and that such an original book as *Elsie Venner* will not lack its fit readers, though few. But even if these be vain hopes, and if, as is probable, the great world ultimately refuse to be interested in Dr. Holmes, the typical repre-

sentative of Unitarian Boston and the heretical descendant of Calvinist saints, we may still conclude that he will yet go down to posterity glorified by the halo of a gracious humanity and holding in one hand a sheaf of delightful poems, in the other his inimitable *Autocrat*.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE POETS (1830-50)

#### II

NEARLY every important author thus far treated had his birth before 1810, the year in which Margaret Fuller and Theodore Parker were born. Thoreau and Melville are exceptions, and the younger Channing and Jones Very might be excepted also could they be deemed important. The second decade of the nineteenth century, which saw their births, saw also those of the orator Wendell Phillips, of the statesman Charles Sumner, and of Harriet Beecher Stowe, John Lothrop Motley, Walt Whitman, and JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL (1819-91), the only writers of real note born during the period. The last named, whose birth took place at Cambridge on February 22, 1819, was nearly ten years younger than Holmes, who nevertheless outlived him by three years. Yet the group of greater New England writers was so knit together by friendship and formed, and still forms, such a unit in the thoughts of the American people, that it is difficult to realize that Lowell shows plainly in his life and writings that he is almost of a later and different generation from that of his compeers. Neither Longfellow, nor Whittier, much less Holmes, showed in his poetry the influence of Keats;

Lowell showed it fully as much as his elder, Tennyson—in other words, Lowell was a more genuinely nineteenth-century poetical product than his friends, for if there is one dominating influence in the English poetry of that century, it is surely that of Keats. Again, Lowell showed that he was younger than his associates by more actively outgrowing the political partisanship almost inevitably and universally developed by the civil war. He was able to become an effective and stimulating leader in the movement for purer and more independent politics that marked the decade from 1880 to 1890. This is to some persons the crowning service of his life, but he could scarcely have performed it had he been ten years older.

Of his exceptionally full and interesting career any mere outline must seem especially meagre and unsatisfactory. Like that of Holmes, the stock from which he sprang was Brahmin of Brahmin. It was also a literary one, for his father, the Rev. Charles Lowell, was something of an author, who handed his talents on, not merely to James Russell, but to two elder children, Mary and Robert Traill Spence Lowell (1816–91). The latter is important enough to demand a few words. He became an Episcopalian clergyman, served in Bermuda, Newfoundland, and various States, and then turned schoolmaster and professor. In 1858 he published a novel of considerable power, based on his Newfoundland experiences, *The New Priest in Conception Bay*. His subsequent fiction is negligible, but his poetry holds somewhat the place beside his brother's that that of Tennyson's brothers does beside his. It at least deserves praise for its high spirituality, its courageous rebuke of worldly wealth and pride. Only one



of his poems can be said to be fairly well known—his spirited and pathetic ballad “The Relief of Lucknow.” Another, “The Brave Old Ship, the Orient” would have made a more prosperous voyage had it not been weighted down with allegory.

James Russell Lowell was born in the colonial house appropriately named Elmwood, which is familiar and dear to his readers. He enjoyed an ideal boyhood in the village he afterward described with so much felicity in his essay “Cambridge Thirty Years Ago.” He graduated at Harvard in 1838, having written for the college magazine prose and verse of more than undergraduate excellence, much of his individual spontaneity and whimsicality being visible in it. For neglect of studies and an escapade in chapel he was rusticated in his senior year to Concord, where he learned to know Emerson—a circumstance which did not make a transcendentalist of him, but must have been of great stimulative value. At Concord he wrote his class poem, which was printed, not read; and in it he amused himself by irreverently satirizing Emerson, Carlyle, and other reformers that presented themselves as targets for his facile wit. He also wrote sprightly letters premonitory of those large volumes of his correspondence which, as soon as they were published, took their place as, on the whole, the most delightful contribution America has yet made to epistolary literature.

Law, literature, lyrics, and love made up his life for the next few years, to which any one “hunting the letter” might add lecturing, longing, and looking about. He was admitted to the bar but did not practise. He fell in love with an exquisitely beautiful and spiritual young

woman and wrote to her immature but sincere poems, some of which may be found in his first volume, *A Year's Life* (1841). Maria White, whom Lowell married at the end of 1844 after a betrothal of five years, was herself a poetess and full of the enthusiasms of the epoch. She kindled Lowell's fine and impressionable nature, deepened him, and enlisted his genius in the antislavery cause. It is hard to resist the feeling that the two young people and the buoyant set in which they moved were somewhat over-sentimental and provincial, but it is equally difficult to withhold from them one's interest, if not one's affection. Space is wanting for a description of their aspirations or for a criticism of the expression they gave them in poetry and in other ways. It must suffice to say that Lowell wrote many poems, which he published in magazines and annuals to the delight of his friends, but of which he retained very few in the collective edition of his works. He also wrote upon what was destined to be throughout his life a favourite topic—the old English dramatists. Profits were precarious, but he was brave and hopeful, and in 1843 he began with a friend to issue a new and, according to competent judgment, a good magazine in that epoch of struggling, dying, and dead periodicals. This was *The Pioneer*, which ran for three numbers on more orthodox literary lines than *The Dial*, and brought its conductors into debt. Lowell was also subjected to serious trouble with his eyes, but he bore up manfully and the same year published a volume of *Poems*, which won considerable notice and certainly showed that his talents were ripening, although "The Legend of Brittany," the most important piece, was still modelled upon the more luxuri-

ant phases of the work of his beloved Keats. "Rhœcus," "Prometheus," and "A Glance Behind the Curtain," with its strong portrayal of Cromwell at the time of his frustrated project of emigration to America, were, however, worthy of surviving as they do in their author's works; and the felicitous "Shepherd of King Admetus" showed that even if Lowell, as he afterward confessed in *A Fable for Critics*, had many "isms"—including literary atavism—hampering him in his ascent of Parnassus, he was capable of writing simply and attractively. He thought his didacticism his chief stumbling-block; perhaps, however, it was his inability, save in humorous verse, to shake off or else to surpass his British masters.

Just before his marriage Lowell finished his first prose book, *Conversations on Some of the Old Poets* (1845), a performance naturally crude but full of idealism and promise. He was fortunately to outgrow the mingled sentiment and sentimentality of the epoch and to develop into the clear-voiced poet of patriotism so revered in after-years by his countrymen. Before this could be, however, he had much to learn and to suffer. After his marriage he worked on an antislavery paper in Philadelphia, and wrote numerous poems and reviews, especially for the *Broadway Journal*, edited by his friend Briggs and by Poe. The establishment of a new organ of freedom, the *Standard*, gave him occasion to write articles on current politics that were excellent training for his future work as a diplomat and an independent in politics. More important for his fame was the inception of the incomparable *Biglow Papers*, in the *Boston Courier* for June 17, 1846. Meanwhile the young couple had returned to Cambridge and taken up

their residence at Elmwood, life being made easier for them by a small inheritance. Then followed the birth of a daughter, who became her father's chief delight, only to be taken from him after little more than a year. The influence of his joy and sorrow could not be obliterated, however, for it deepened and refined his nature, as "The Changeling" and other poems remain to show. Another little daughter brought happiness once more, and his literary work steadily gained in power. The *Biglow Papers* were continued, a second series of his *Poems* was issued, he wrote numerous editorials in the *Standard* and elaborate literary articles for the dignified reviews, and finally made 1848 his *annus mirabilis* not merely by collecting the wit and wisdom of the Rev. Homer Wilbur and the latter's interesting friends Hosea Biglow and B. Sawin, Esq., but also by inducing "G. P. Putnam, Broadway," to "set forth" *A Fable for Critics*.

The whimsical, humorous, witty, wise, patriotic, and fearless Lowell who had so long been overlaid, so far as the public were concerned, by the Lowell straining at beauty and profundity now stood revealed. He had discovered what literary sustenance he could most thoroughly assimilate. He had taken a hint from previous American humorists, and made the best New England rustics drawn from nature discuss current politics in the best Yankee dialect up to that time written down for the delectation of mankind. He had developed a Yankee parson worthy of the family of Adams and Primrose. He had infused into his swinging stanzas, which may have owed a hint to Coleridge, a love of freedom and a hatred of national cowardice and wrongdoing which Whittier could



not surpass, and had lashed his victims with a satiric power unrivalled since the death of Byron. More important still were the shrewdness, the homely sense, the remarkably ripe political wisdom displayed by this young man who so shortly before had seemed not a little visionary. The result was the first series of *The Biglow Papers*, in which American satiric and humorous poetry obviously culminate, and to which many readers of a later day have turned longing eyes when the nation has seemed to wander from the path of duty and no Lowell has arisen to summon and to laugh her back.

But Lowell had done more; he had added to the series of English poetical satires on poets and their poetry one little inferior in sheer power to the best of them, and superior to any of them in extravagant humour. Indeed, it might be held that while in the anapæsts, the puns, and to some extent the machinery of *A Fable for Critics*, Lowell plainly had not been original, he had really developed a new poetical product—to wit, a combination of a panegyric, a satire, and an elaborate *jeu d'esprit*. There is nothing new in a satirist's praising men and things he likes in order more effectively to damn those he dislikes, but it would seem that Lowell had a higher end in view in his noble apostrophe to his native Bay State and in his often overgenerous criticisms of his worthy contemporaries. Over half his too long poem is a genuine, if humorous, tribute of respect to his friends rather than a satire on the bardlings recruited by "Tityrus Griswold." Like all satires and panegyrics, although less than most, since Lowell was wise enough not to name many of the versifiers he ridiculed, it suffers from the fact that some

of its matter is now trivial and obscure, and like nearly all elaborate attempts at fun-making, it contains pages which, after the lapse of nearly two generations, seem less delightful to us than they did to contemporaries of the author. But with all deductions made, *A Fable for Critics*, while not a masterpiece like Byron's *Vision of Judgment*, is a strikingly vigorous and amusing poem of more than occasional interest and importance.

The delightful qualities as well as the serious merits of *The Biglow Papers* and the less valuable *Fable for Critics* should not make us forget that 1848 was also an important year for Lowell because in it he seems to have written one of the most popular of his more strictly poetical compositions, *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, which was published at the end of the year. The moral of this semi-Tennysonian incursion into the realms of Arthurian romance is sufficiently exemplary and democratic to account in part for its popularity; but some of Lowell's critics have probably been justified in holding that readers have been more attracted by the passion and charm of the poet's outburst in praise of June than by the moralized legend itself. This outburst occurs in the rather disjointed first "Prelude" which contains not merely the often quoted

And what is so rare as a day in June?

but also the sententious verses that supplement Wordsworth—

Not only around our infancy  
Doth heaven with all its splendours lie;  
Daily with souls that cringe and plot,  
We Sinais climb and know it not.

The fact that American children have been set to studying *Sir Launfal* in annotated editions may be a pathetic illustration of what may be termed the "patriotic fallacy" in matters connected with literature, but it can scarcely be denied that when he added the poem to the small group of his good lyrical and reflective pieces and to his triumphs in humorous satire, Lowell completed his thirtieth year with a total achievement that promised much for the future—perhaps promised more than he was destined to perform.

His literary success did not bring Lowell the pecuniary rewards that would have been his had it come thirty years later; indeed for some years after his marriage his income was rather narrow. It sufficed, however, and in spite of the death of his mother and of another child the years between 1845 and 1851 may be described as happy for the man and propitious for the writer. His wife was frail, however, and in the spring of 1851 it was resolved that the small family should spend a year or more in Europe. They sailed in July, and it may be confidently asserted that no ship ever carried from the new world to the old a man better fitted to profit from the latter without losing in the slightest degree what he had gained from the former. "Leaves from my Journal" and his letters describe so pleasantly Lowell's experiences that there is no need of dwelling upon his sojourn in Rome, marred by the death of a little son, or the other events of his journey. This lasted fifteen months, and concluded with a visit to England, where he saw Landor. It was naturally not a time for writing, but rather for gathering materials for developing the poetical power which had been shown abun-

dantly in the portion of his "Pictures from Appledore" written before he left America. On his return he resumed his labours with freshened energy, although he did not finish until three years later the admirable, if over-expanded, poem of hills and ocean which has just been mentioned. He was in no frame of mind to write other than elegiac verses, for his wife had died a year after the return journey was made. He was left with a young daughter in the old house, where his breaking father and his sister could do little to cheer him. He gradually came to himself, however, and continued in *Putnam's Magazine* the contributions he had begun in 1853 with his agreeable "Moosehead Journal." Early in 1855 he gave twelve lectures on poetry before the Lowell Institute of Boston, and they were so successful that he was soon after offered Longfellow's chair at Harvard. The pedagogical labours at which the older poet had rebelled were lifted from his successor's shoulders, and Lowell was free to enjoy his academic lecturing far more than he did his experiences as a peripatetic in the West, where overhot stoves and overcold audiences put his good-humour to a severe test. As a professor he never seems to have put the good-humour of his classes, or even their slight knowledge, to practically any test at all; but his pupils have delighted to bear tribute to his kindness, to his capacity to talk interestingly on every conceivable subject, to the highly educative quality of his scholarly desultoriness, and above all to his success as a teacher of Dante.

Before entering upon his new duties Lowell again sailed for Europe, and was absent a year, the most important event of his stay being probably the visit he made



to Chartres, which resulted years later in his long semi-Browningsque poem *The Cathedral* (1870). Perhaps if this had been written in 1855 the grotesque effects produced by such lapses from good taste as may be observed in the lines

As if all beauty were a ghastly bore,  
The faucet to let loose a wash of words

would have been avoided, but it may be questioned whether the over-admired production would not have lost in intellectual acuteness and in depth of matured feeling.

Home again, Lowell, always a wide and observant reader, became probably a wider and a closer one, and rapidly made himself one of the best equipped general scholars not merely of America, but of the world. His interest lay chiefly in literature as a means to culture, but he also thoroughly enjoyed linguistic studies, and was probably better equipped in this particular, as well as in the older portions of the Romance literatures, than any other of the chief English-speaking critics. In other words, Lowell, while preparing his college lectures, was also preparing for the important series of literary essays and addresses produced by him during the last twenty-five years of his life. He furthermore made his later life a happier one by his marriage in 1857 with a charming and able woman, and the same year he became editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, to which practically all of his work in verse and prose was contributed for the next few years. In spite of his insouciance and slight sluggishness he seems to have been most conscientious in his editing, but he was probably more than half glad when, in 1861, a change of publishers threw the *Atlantic* into the

keeping of the well-qualified James T. Fields. Certainly little poetry of importance was written by Lowell while he was judging that of other people, and of his numerous reviews and articles he retained but few in the final edition of his works.

The civil war and the ensuing period of reconstruction led of course to increased political writing. Lowell was of too ardent a temperament not to infuse a considerable amount of partisanship into his articles, and he was too fond of a joke and a sally to be able to write with much popular effectiveness. Such of the rather lengthy disquisitions of the period as are collected in a volume of his works are undeniably interesting and slightly important, but they are not comparable in carrying power to his political addresses of two decades later. Nor, on the whole, is the second series of *The Biglow Papers*, contributed to the *Atlantic* mainly during 1862 and 1863, equal in humour and power to the series called forth by the less important Mexican War. The famous "No. VI. Sunthin' in the Pastoral Line" is indeed one of the supreme achievements of dialect poetry, and so is "The Courtin'," but these have little or nothing to do with the motive underlying the satires. "Jonathan to John" is excellent, but it seems as if Birdofredum Sawin's matrimonial experiences in the South had somehow made him a less delectable rascal. But whatever may be our opinions on these points, few of us are likely to disagree with the general verdict that the complete *Biglow Papers* with their elaborate machinery of comico-scholastic comment make as good reading as almost any other book written by an American. Their appeal is more or less made to

sophisticated readers; like many another educated man's efforts to reproduce the thoughts and feelings of rustics, they lie open to the charge of factitiousness; but they also represent much that was best in Lowell's own character, and thus seem to have a permanent basis of subjective truth.

The second series of the *Biglow Papers* by no means constituted Lowell's sole contribution to the poetry of the civil war. In 1863 he wrote a patriotic ode in memory of Colonel Robert G. Shaw, and two years later recited an ode at the commemoration held by Harvard in honour of its alumni that had fallen in the contest. The latter was not at first remarkably effective, but it has risen steadily in the affections of Americans, not so much on the supposition that it is a thoroughly artistic poem as because it is steeped in the glow of patriotism and contains a stanza which embodies as nothing else does the ideal formed of the character of Lincoln by large numbers of his countrymen. As a poem the "Commemoration Ode" is overlong and at times too subtle in thought and expression. Together with Lowell's later odes (the *Three Memorial Poems*, as he called them when they were published in 1877) it lacks the continued harmony and the surpassing felicities of diction and rhythm to be found in a few of the greatest English odes. But the whole group of poems so splendidly illustrates the finest national ideals that it is difficult for any American to judge them coolly. The longest of the later poems—diffuseness was apparently Lowell's besetting sin in both his chief poems and his chief literary essays—the ode entitled "Under the Old Elm," which commemorated the hundredth anniversary

of Washington's taking command of the Revolutionary army, is one of the noblest panegyrics to be found in any literature; but if a calm foreign critic were to object that it is not simple and sensuous enough for the highest poetry, that the insight and knowledge displayed are too great for proper fusion into a lyric poem, it might be difficult to confute him.

Returning to the war period, we find Lowell in 1863 undertaking, with Prof. Charles Eliot Norton as his more active colleague, the editorship of the ancient and respectable, but not prosperous *North American Review*. In this he printed many articles, including some of his best political and literary papers. In 1868 he published the gathered poems of twenty years in a volume entitled *Under the Willows*—a collection which plainly revealed his growth as an artist and a man. Yet it may be doubted whether in point of style or matter it showed Lowell's to be a fresh and authoritative voice to his generation. He did not deal with the religious perplexities of his age as Matthew Arnold did; he did not probe souls as Browning did; he did not calmly and sweetly satisfy æsthetic and spiritual desires as Tennyson did. He gave his readers a variety of subjects and several really excellent poems, such as the "Pictures from Appledore"; yet while obviously richer in thought, imagination, and power of artistic expression than any of his American rivals, he seemed to remain a bookish poet reaching out in vain for an opportunity to use his great powers effectively. Not a very different impression is produced by *Hearts-ease and Rue*, the volume which, in 1888, brought together the poems of another twenty years. Here there



was less reaching out, save in the long memorial ode on the great naturalist Agassiz, in which the undeniable charm and culture of the Cambridge circle are extolled in a provincial way. This last collection of Lowell's lifetime is specially interesting because it shows in several poems that he was influenced by the refined feeling for poetic, especially for lyrical, form characteristic of British and American poetry during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. His genius was impressionable to the last, but at least twice—in the *Biglow Papers* and the odes—it had shaken off nearly all its limitations and placed him perhaps above all other American poets save Poe and Whitman. In both instances it was his love of country that dealt the liberating stroke.

Meanwhile Lowell's reputation as a prose-writer and critic had been overtaking his reputation as a poet. In 1867 he had extinguished the last flickers of poor Percival's fame, had discussed Lessing and Rousseau, and had written his charming sketch of Edmund Quincy, "A Great Public Character." The next year he gave fresh proof of his love and knowledge of nature in "My Garden Acquaintance." A year later came the much needed "On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners," and the year following, in the *North American*, the stimulating but at times misleading, essay on Chaucer. When collected in *Among my Books* (1870) and *My Study Windows* (1871) his best prose writings showed Americans that their distinguished poet was also their ablest critic, and by far their greatest man of letters in the more technical sense of that phrase. The returns from his writings were not, however, sufficiently large to obviate the necessity of his

selling part of Elmwood in 1871, in order that he might secure himself a fair income.

In 1872 he resigned his professorship and spent two pleasant years abroad. On his return he took up his professional work again, published a second series of *Among my Books* (1876), and wrote his *Memorial Poems*. His patriotism was stirred once more to a white heat by the political corruptions of Grant's second administration, and he took a small part in practical politics. He was a presidential elector in the disputed election of 1876 and cast his vote, as his State expected him to do, for Hayes, although the title of Tilden was probably the less clouded. Shortly after, through his friends, especially through Mr. William Dean Howells, the Austrian mission was offered him. This he declined, but with the intimation that he should like to see a play of his favourite Calderon's acted. In consequence he was appointed minister to Spain, and sailed for his post in July, 1877. He filled it three years, studying men and events, sending home excellent despatches, taking part gracefully though not ecstasically in court functions, perfecting his knowledge of the language and literature of which he was so fond, and finding time for a little travel. No threateningly serious international question having arisen either during this mission or during the more important one to Great Britain, which filled the years 1880-85, it is impossible to determine how well qualified he was for the higher, more subtle, and more arduous duties of diplomacy.

Yet the services of Lowell in Great Britain were almost if not quite as great as they would have been had he threaded safely some very tangled diplomatic complica-

tion. He was in many respects the most fitting representative the daughter country had ever sent to the mother. He was a spokesman of American culture to a people who were not very sure that America could export that article. He had shown by his criticisms, political and literary, that he was not overawed by British achievements, and that he had a very high opinion of those of his own country. Such a frank, witty, learned, and, above all, brave man was bound to appeal strongly to a manly nation. He was honoured in various ways, was brought forth to make after-dinner speeches and addresses, and was given the opportunity, of which he thoroughly availed himself, to lay firmly the foundations of that friendship between Great Britain and America the growth of which rendered memorable the closing years of the nineteenth century. With regard to the great felicity and humour of his speeches and the dignity and grace of his delivery on weighty occasions there seems to have been but one opinion. Of the permanent value of his memorial addresses on Fielding, Wordsworth, and Coleridge readers can easily judge for themselves. To some they will perhaps seem to gain upon his literary essays through their enforced concision, their riper judgment, and especially their greater dignity, their comparative freedom from whimsicality and glitter. Those who do not subscribe to this opinion will nevertheless be probably willing to admit that the address on "Democracy," which was delivered at Birmingham, October 6, 1884, and two years later furnished a title for a collection of his occasional deliverances, represents Lowell the man and the thoughtful patriot at his very highest. Probably

no other American has ever expressed with such maturity of thought and depth of feeling based upon experience the ideals of democracy, or so adequately summed up its achievements and outlined its perils. It was a complete answer to those of his countrymen who had criticised him for supposititious truckling to the British Government in the case of some arrested Irish-American citizens—the only difficult international question he had to handle—and for a general tendency to become Anglicized.

Just before his English mission closed Lowell's second wife, whose state of health had long clouded his life, died after a short illness. He returned much saddened to America, did not resume his teaching, and left Elmwood to its tenants. He resided with his married daughter not far from Boston, and took life rather easily—a performance at no time disagreeable to him. He had his share in the efforts to secure international copyright, delivered some addresses and wrote a few articles and poems, paid summer visits to England and the Continent, lectured on the old dramatists, and published his poems *Heartsease and Rue*. His last important service to his countrymen was his timely and wise address, "The Place of the Independent in Politics," delivered before the Reform Club of New York on April 13, 1888. This he shortly after included in a volume entitled *Political Essays*. He was less hopeful than he had been when he praised democracy before his Birmingham audience, less disposed than most Americans are to believe in the efficacy of the two-party system. His analysis of the evils of the then existing political situation was acute, as subsequent



events, especially those connected with the Spanish-American War, have shown; but it was not sufficiently radical, since it did not expose the reasons why the two-party system must in all probability lose its efficiency in a period of complex social and economic questions. But it was a noble address, and constituted not the least of his claims to the praise and gratitude showered upon him from all quarters on his seventieth birthday. Another address, two good introductions to English classics, a few poems, and the complete edition of his writings in ten volumes followed; then, while he was still enjoying his books at Elmwood, to which he had returned, and was even planning fresh labours, the end came peaceably, August 12, 1891. Since his death poems, articles, lectures, *juvenilia*, antislavery writings, and his letters have been published, and in consequence his works have been swelled by eight or nine volumes which should not be overlooked either by the student or by the reader, although the letters are the only posthumous contribution of prime interest and importance.

Criticism of Lowell is rendered specially difficult because more completely than any of his contemporaries he accommodated himself to national changes in thought and feeling, and thus seemed to be no older than writers born after *A Fable for Critics* had laughed into oblivion the poetasters and criticasters of the first half of the nineteenth century. With regard to his work and rank as a poet little need be added to what has been already said. As a racy humorist and a brilliant wit using verse as an instrument of expression, he has no clear superior, probably no equal, so far at least as American

readers are concerned, among writers who have employed the English language. As a satirist he has superiors, but scarcely as an inventor of *jeux d'esprit*, even if "The Unhappy Lot of Mr. Knott" stands as a still more unhappy example of the kind of noose into which such an inventor occasionally gets his neck. As a patriotic lyrist he has few equals and very few superiors in what is probably the highest function of such a poet—that of stimulating to a noble height the national instincts of his countrymen. But viewed in the light of cosmopolitanism, such lyrics are not supreme in their inspiration, and viewed in the light of technical criticism Lowell's odes are far from faultless. The rest of his poetry may fairly be said to gain on that of any of his American contemporaries save Poe, in more sensuous rhythm, in choicer diction, in a more refined and subtilized imagination, and in a deeper, a more brooding intelligence. But for some readers it lacks spontaneous passion from first to last, and in spite of many really admirable poems, some of which have been already named, it scarcely gives any form of æsthetic or mental satisfaction that cannot be gained in larger measure from the work of some contemporary British poet. If this be true, it is idle to expect Englishmen to value Lowell's work in the higher spheres of poetry to the same extent that they do the fresher, more original poetry of Poe and Whitman. The art of the one, the elemental force of the other, have made and will probably continue to make a stronger appeal to foreigners than can fairly be expected of any other American poets. Lowell's countrymen may, if they please, use him and the other New England poets in order to secure the pleasure and profit that Englishmen derive from Ten-

nyson, Browning, and Arnold; they may say hard words of Poe and Whitman; but they will probably not lessen appreciably the growing cosmopolitan fame of the dissimilar pair, nor will they succeed in having their own favourites reckoned among the indisputably great poets of the English-speaking world. Yet should they ever cease to claim for Lowell's humorous and patriotic poetry genuine and high admiration, and for his total poetical product ungrudging respect, they will show themselves unworthy of being his countrymen.

Lowell's prose writings probably raise fewer critical difficulties than his poetry does, but they do present at least one important problem. As we have seen, there can be little question that he is the most cultured writer, the most accomplished scholar, the most expert man of letters yet produced by America. He is also in all probability the most pregnant academic speaker, and although he is not the greatest American writer upon political subjects he is one of the wisest and most uplifting. It would involve too lengthy a discussion to inquire whether as an essayist his unique blending of whimsical, buoyant humour, flashing wit, wide scholarship, subtle observation, and catholic love of nature and man outweigh the urbanity, the lambent humour, the gentle sympathy, the tender pathos of Irving. It is almost certain, however, that the qualities that render so delightful Lowell's less technically literary essays, such as "My Garden Acquaintance," seem much more individual and less old-fashioned than the qualities that endeared Irving to readers of three generations ago. They surely attract a larger number of latter-day readers—at least of the exigent type—but

whether they will wear as well is a question worthy of consideration. Many of Lowell's admirers, however, are accustomed to speak of him as a great prose-writer and a great critic; they either force or do not shrink from a comparison of him and Matthew Arnold, not to speak of other British writers of eminence. But are these claims that can be supported?

It is clear that tentative language is advisable here. Lowell's prose works may have the individual style and the range and quality of thought and imagination requisite to carry a fair proportion of them down the ages, but his friends must be prepared to expect peremptory challenges along the way for some time to come. It seems certain that there is a wearying amount of corrosion in his essays, that they often contain poetical elements that might have been more serviceable if utilized in his verse, that they are far too frequently overlong, not to say sprawling in structure. On the other hand, they are so full of that indefinable something called flavour, they are so often illuminating, so packed with surprises and felicities of thought and imagination admirably expressed, that they may answer all challenges with something of the good-humoured sense of mastery their author was wont to display throughout his life.

But was Lowell a great critic? Yes and no, if an answer must be given. As a lover and close student of the best that has been written in all the chief literatures, as a writer capable of inspiring in others much of his own love of good books and authors, as an often marvellously successful revealer of the spirit of the writings and of the men he deals with, as an illuminator, a stimulator, an in-



terpreter, few critics of any age or land have excelled him. But as a balanced, impartial judge, as a philosophical and scientific student of the facts of literary history, as the originator or even the unerring wielder of a critical method—in short, as a critic on whose verdicts great reliance may be placed and from whose concrete criticism readers and less well-endowed critics can in a measure learn to estimate the value and to appreciate more deeply and broadly the power and charm of what they read, Lowell can hardly be ranked with the masters of criticism. It is only fair to add that he made no such claim for himself, and that perhaps only his extreme admirers make it for him.

In his criticism he displayed an inordinate fondness for dealing with details and for catching other, and especially British writers tripping—in other words, he often, as in the essay on Milton, let the large game fly in order to pounce upon smaller victims like the errors of Professor Masson. It is furthermore clear that Lowell was frequently hasty in his generalizations and specific statements, or else that he was not so careful as he should have been to explain his point of view. For example, when enumerating the cosmopolitan writers since Virgil he gives no reason for his omission of Molière; he calls Dante the most virile of poets without considering the claims of Shakespeare, Homer, or Milton; he ignores the value of the poetry of Drummond of Hawthornden; in his excellent essay on Dryden he slights the latter's great odes. Such examples could be easily multiplied, nor are they merely such lapses or omissions as must inevitably be found in the work of every critic. They appear to spring from the fact that

Lowell was rather a talker about books, pouring out from his wonderfully full mind what seemed for the moment most apropos and entertaining, than an orderly critic carefully and systematically discussing his subjects. It is only on some such hypothesis, taken in connection with the fact that he frequently wrote to fill gaps in *The North American Review*, that one can readily explain the formless character of even such an essay as that on Dante which is in parts as good as anything of the kind can well be. Perhaps the matter may be summed up in three queries: Do we not often find ourselves reading Lowell's literary essays rather for the sake of their author than of their respective subjects? When we do consult them primarily to learn something about their subjects, do we not turn to them in special expectation of the apt, the quotable phrase and the sudden illuminating flash? Do we not, finally, catch ourselves wondering whether Lowell's critical essays are not full of good criticism without being good criticism? But we should part from Lowell without insisting upon his defects as a critic. Let us rather remember him as perhaps the fullest and most vital contemporary force in the culture of the nation he so deeply loved.

To pass from James Russell Lowell to Nathaniel Parker Willis (1806-67) not only seems like going back more than a generation, but also comes near suggesting the descent from the sublime to the trivial, if not to the ridiculous. Willis was born at Portland, Maine, about a year before the birth of his more famous townsman, Longfellow. He came of energetic Puritan ancestors, and inherited his instinct for journalism from three successive generations.

His father, also a Nathaniel, who outlived his son and died at the age of ninety, was a pioneer of religious and juvenile journalism; *The Youth's Companion*, which he founded at Boston in 1827, is still in existence, and an important periodical of its kind. Young Willis was strictly reared, but by the time he left Yale to try his fortunes in Boston, he had become a facile versifier, a clever social favourite, a lover of the soft and luxurious things of life, a sentimental admirer of women, a coxcomb with saving sense and not too large a dash of wildness. When he graduated in 1827, he had a reputation for brilliancy perhaps wider than was ever attained by any other American collegian, unless it be Alexander Hamilton.

In Boston, although he showed ability and pluck in conducting a magazine and inaugurated his prolific career with a volume of *Fugitive Poetry* (1829), Willis soon found himself in an unpropitious environment. He then went to New York, began his long connection with *The Mirror*, and shortly after started for Europe as a correspondent. He found himself immediately in the world of fashion, bustle, and luxury for which his starved imagination had been longing. The methods by which he attained entrance to this world and the way he conducted himself when within its precincts were once harshly criticised, not without considerable injustice. The details of his five years' career of social and literary success on the Continent and in England are, however, of as little concern to most latter-day readers as his long popular and still interesting *Pencillings by the Way* (1835), in which his experiences are recorded, or his clever, extravagant stories of the same period entitled *The Slingsby Papers*.

His subsequent career in America is also rapidly fading from the popular mind. He showed that he was more than a mere reporter and social parasite by describing rural life in his pleasant *Letters from under a Bridge* (1839) and by sometimes displaying true poetic inspiration, as in his beautiful lyric, "Unseen Spirits." For the decade from 1840 to 1850 he was probably the best paid writer in the country, and certainly one of New York's chief celebrities. We still remember the famous, if mythical, Boston merchant who "guessed Gō-ēthe was the N. P. Willis of Germany," but we ought in justice to the unfortunate victim of this well-meant parallel to remember that Willis never tired of helping to the best of his ability his struggling fellow-writers. Nor should we forget that in his period of declining health and deteriorating work, Willis, in his efforts to steer his last periodical bark, *The Home Journal*, through the troubled waters of the civil war, displayed qualities which such readers as his biography attracts are likely to denominate heroic.<sup>1</sup>

Willis's writings are perhaps a little better known to his countrymen than the details of his life, since his scriptural poems are still somewhat read and a few of his so-called "Poems of Passion," like "Parrhasius," are still declaimed by schoolboys. It is plain, however, that most of his work is hopelessly dead and that it requires slight criticism. His prose at its best is that of the talented gossip and reporter. It is pleasant reading for any one

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<sup>1</sup> See Prof. H. A. Beers's excellent memoir in the *American Men of Letters*.



interested in the generation it sketches. As a writer of stories and novelettes he is too unrealistic and at the same time too little idealistic to please many modern readers. One may run through his extravaganzas and his melodramatic performances without great exertion, but also without being repaid. It is much the same with the mass of his poetry. His Donna Juana poem "Lady Jane" is readable and not devoid of facile cleverness. His exotic "Melanie" and "Lord Ivan and his Daughter" are almost interesting through their fatuity. His numerous scriptural poems, such as "The Healing of the Daughter of Jairus" and "Hagar in the Wilderness," are as palatable as a mixture of inspiration and water, to borrow Lowell's phrase, can well be made. His lyrics of sentiment and piety, while often far from bad, are seldom capable of making a profound appeal. That he possessed decided talents for metrical composition, that he knew how to make his sentiment and humour attract the readers of his own day, that from the mass of his poetry several effective poems and a few excellent ones may be culled by the anthologist, should be cheerfully admitted, but beyond this it is scarcely possible to go in the way of praise. It may, however, be remarked that Willis's generation was not in the least to blame for enjoying him. His scriptural poems were especially adapted to the tastes of a pious people who knew their Bible better than any other book. He showed excellent discretion in choosing themes which he could elaborate without giving offence, and he used a blank verse which, although the reverse of rich and sonorous, was easily read, and displayed metrical ability within narrow limits. Last but not least, he was often

able in his poetry to appeal to that sense for the pathetic and to that deferential sentiment for women for which the American people have long been noted.

If the once famous verses of Willis deserve such mild praise, what shall be said of the mass of the rhyming contemporaries to whom he gave encouragement? Can none be defended against the shafts of Lowell, or better still, be rescued from the limbo of Griswold's *Poets and Poetry*? Amiable anthologists and critics have already made the attempt, but have succeeded only in keeping a few names half alive and in securing limited recognition of the merits of a few poems. Mr. Stedman, in his *American Anthology* of 1900, secured most of the minor poets to whom he was so gracious from the writers that flourished or drooped after 1850. He did his best to include at least a poem from each of the chief favourites of Griswold, but he had to leave several worthies unrepresented. With all his liberality he left it extremely doubtful whether many of the bards he admitted to the earlier pages of his *Anthology* were entitled even to the name of minor poet. A true minor poet ought to be more than a mere name and to be fairly readable; but few, save students, know more than the names, if so much, of most of the versifiers of the period. Even the devoted admirer of Poe does not think of steeping himself in the spontaneous sentiment of Mrs. Frances Sargent Osgood or of any other of Poe's favourites.

But while no one who has not read widely in the verse of the period can conceive its dreariness or its interminable abundance, it is safe to remember that the impulse to impute folly to our ancestors is itself a foolish one.

It is not certain that Griswold was for his day much less critical than most of us are for ours. If the student of the period does grow weary and desponding, he sooner or later becomes inured to his task and learns a few facts—not of great consequence indeed, but still facts. One of these facts is that good reasons can be found for some of Griswold's apparent ineptitudes. For example, the space he gives to Charles Fenno Hoffman (1806-84), of New York, author of the romance *Greyslaer* and of books of Western travel, and first editor of *The Knickerbocker*, seems absurd at first sight; but when one has read the posthumous volume of Hoffman's poems, one perceives that he possessed a lyric note almost completely unknown in the America of his time. Scarcely a single other American, not excepting the genuine poets of the period, was capable of writing a song that really sung itself. Hoffman was too slightly equipped in other respects to do more than have his songs sung by his contemporaries, but Griswold was not uncritical when he drew attention to the singing gift of a writer who was soon to share the darker side of the fate of Collins. Others of Griswold's favourites, to judge by the space he accorded them, are seen upon nearer view to have had claims upon his regard. For example, Epes Sargent (1813-80) of Boston was quite a figure in his day as a dramatist, a biographer, and miscellaneous compiler and editor, and in his *Songs of the Sea* showed some poetic ability. He is likely to live for a long time to come in the memories of those who enjoy, at least in song,

A life on the ocean wave,  
A home on the rolling deep.

Sargent's popular song reminds us that he and Park Benjamin, author of "The Old Sexton," are not the only "one-poem poets" of our period. To this class belongs Prof. Clement C. Moore of New York, almost forgotten as a Hebraist, but known to thousands through his juvenile classic "'Twas the Night before Christmas." Here also must be mentioned Philip Pendleton Cooke of Virginia, who is now remembered solely for his charming lyric of sentiment "Florence Vane." This is almost the fate of another Southerner, Richard Henry Wilde (1789-1847), whose "My Life is like the Summer Rose" is a beautiful and popular poem, which, like the still more famous lyric of another native of Ireland, Wolfe's "Burial of Sir John Moore," was once deemed unoriginal because an unacknowledged translation had been set afloat.

We may conclude with a brief mention of two writers who have been brought forward as inspirers of Poe and with praise for one genuine minor poet. Dr. Thomas Holley Chivers of Georgia evidently borrowed from Poe, whose friendship he cultivated, and deserves remembrance solely as a rare curiosity of literature, as a lyrist of remarkable melody and almost total lack of mental coherence. Whether Poe really got a hint for his "Raven" from the second of his putative inspirers, Albert Pike (1809-91), is a question we need not dwell upon, since Pike's "The Widowed Heart," with its refrain

Thou art lost to me forever, Isadore,

is easily accessible. Pike's own varied and stirring career and his relations with a greater poet than Poe, make him nevertheless a somewhat interesting personage. Early in life he fell under the influence of Coleridge, and more



especially of Keats, and wrote certain *Hymns to the Gods*, which appeared in Willis's Boston magazine and later in *Blackwood's* (1839). They have not been specially well known, but have never lacked admirers, some of whom discover in them a classical quality which they assuredly do not possess. They are rather the most clever imitations of Keats's "Hymn to Pan" in *Endymion* that probably any mortal has ever written. Indeed one has to rub one's eyes sometimes in order to detect the rhetoric and the note of the imitative exercise of slender talents that separate them from the true poetry upon which they are modelled. And when all allowances have been made, one wishes Pike had written more.

But we may fortunately close with a poet who had more command of himself than any of the other minor verse-writers of his time. In 1843 Dr. Thomas William Parsons of Boston (1819-92), whose life was almost coterminous with that of his friend Lowell, published a translation of the first ten cantos of Dante's *Inferno*, in the quatrains of Dryden and Gray. He had previously written the poem by which he is mainly known to the larger public, "Lines on a Bust of Dante," which are excellent in thought, feeling, and expression, and perhaps culminate in the striking second half of the following semistanza:

He used Rome's harlot for his mirth;  
Plucked bare hypocrisy and crime;  
But valiant souls of knightly worth  
Transmitted to the rolls of time.

Dr. Parsons had been educated in Boston, but his true life opened for him when, in 1836, he visited Europe and

began the studies of the greatest Italian poet which ended only with his own death. He adopted a useful profession not often illustrated by grace of scholarship, that of dentistry, which he practised both in London and in Boston. He wrote original verses which are nearly always worth reading, although seldom reaching a marked excellence. In other words, he was a true minor poet—that is, one that can be read with some pleasure and profit, but may be neglected with only slight loss. But Dr. Parsons's heart was really in his translation of Dante, on which he laboured slowly yet with charming faithfulness. Even at the end of his long life he had not completed the *Comedy*; the *Inferno*, a large portion of the *Purgatorio*, and a few fragments of the *Paradiso* remain, however, to attest the value of his loving labours. According to the best opinion, the translation has high merits as a transfusion of great poetry into poetry of far less power, but faithful to the spirit of its original, and also characterized by a charm proceeding from the translator. But after all, the touch of genius to be found in Dr. Parsons is probably not shown concretely by his translation or by his own poems, but rather by his capacity to give himself up so completely and so beautifully to his pursuit of a noble ideal. For it is surely a noble ideal to steep one's self in a poem and a poet so noble as the *Divine Comedy* and Dante, not merely for self-gratification and elevation, but in order that one's fellow-countrymen may be allowed to share in one's joy and profit.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It seems proper to mention a still popular poem of this period (1847), the Kentuckian Theodore O'Hara's spirited martial elegy, "The Bivouac of the Dead."

## CHAPTER XVII

### POETS AND NOVELISTS (1850-65)

THE period of nearly fifteen years from the Compromise of 1850 to the surrender of Lee at Appomattox is naturally more marked in the history of politics than in that of literature, but is of considerable importance in the latter. In politics it is a period of popular blindness, of unwillingness to face unpleasant facts, of increasing arrogance on the part of the slavery advocates and vehemence on the part of the abolitionists, and finally of a swift defining of issues and alignment of forces resulting in four years of almost titanic civil war. When the contest was over the republic of jarring sections was a nation, not united indeed, but bound to become so in time. In imaginative literature the period is marked by the continuation, on at least a fair level, of the work of the distinguished writers discussed in the last five chapters, by the addition to their number of two specially important names, those of Whitman and Mrs. Stowe, and by the advent of a number of younger authors of considerable although not conspicuous power. Some of these are still living, and perhaps all of them are too near for impartial criticism. It seems plain, however, that while a little progress was made in history and criticism and while in

the literature of humour some development took place, poetry and fiction, apart from the work of the older writers, did not on the whole maintain themselves, although the latter gave premonitions of an important change of method. Mrs. Stowe and Whitman were both born before 1820, and were thus really contemporary with the authors we have been discussing. Bayard Taylor and his contemporaries, to whom this chapter belongs of right, were born after the period of moral and political compromise with regard to slavery began; grew up during the coarse Jacksonian epoch; did their first work amid the excitement caused by the Mexican War, the discovery of gold in California, the spread of railroads and telegraph-lines, and the general confusion, political and social, of the decade preceding the civil war; were caught in that great maelstrom just at the period when they should have been maturing their talents by means of study and reflection; and were doomed to do their main work during the horrible chaos of political and financial corruption known as the reconstruction epoch. It is not surprising that their performance is disappointing, especially when it is compared with that of the writers who had been permitted to grow up in the comparatively homogeneous and unvulgarized New England of the first half of the century.

But in spite of all their disadvantages the newer writers of poetry and fiction rendered important services to American literature. They upheld high ideals in a crass period, they profited from the lessons in literary art given by such British writers as Tennyson and Thackeray, they assisted and were helped by such popular educational movements as the reform of the public schools, the exten-



sion of the lyceum system, the establishment of the modern magazine. They utilized their increased opportunities for travel, and not only brought Europe nearer to America, but unfolded to Americans the wonders of their own country. Even the writers of the lachrymose, pietistic fiction that somewhat supplanted the romances of writers like Bird and Simms helped forward the development of that local fiction which was so much cultivated during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In short, although we can predicate of few of the men and women now to be treated great individual achievements, we may justly claim that they wrote a few worthy poems and books and that they helped greatly to educate and refine their fellow-citizens.

The name of Bayard Taylor at once suggests those of two other Pennsylvanian poets, George Henry Boker and Thomas Buchanan Read, as well as of three others of his friends, the still fortunately surviving poets Richard Henry Stoddard, Edmund Clarence Stedman, and Thomas Bailey Aldrich. The last three writers were born in New England, but of the whole group only Mr. Aldrich is closely associated with that region, and even he did early work in New York. In other words, we must now be prepared to find the Middle States rising in literary importance and New York City becoming once more, and apparently for a long period, the literary capital of the country. We must also be prepared to chronicle for both South and West more books and writers of fair importance.

BAYARD TAYLOR (1825-78) was born at Kennett Square, Chester County, Pennsylvania. He came of

Quaker stock and was reared in the tenets of that sect, although the fact that his father was not a member of the Society introduced a liberalizing element into his life. His later tendency to cosmopolitanism and his love of all things German was doubtless partly due to the fact that he could count certain Mennonites among his ancestors. At first, however, his life was as narrow as that of most other farmer lads. He revolted from it, showed an early desire to rove, read what books he could get, put his small schooling to good use, and wrote verses, some of which, to his intense delight, were published in a Philadelphia newspaper when he was sixteen. He was early apprenticed to a printer, but before his time was out made the acquaintance of Griswold, who encouraged him to issue a volume of poems. This appeared in 1844 and was repudiated in after-years. Then a desire to travel which had been whetted by Willis's *Pencillings* and Longfellow's *Hyperion* overmastered him. He himself overmastered difficulties that would have daunted most youths. He bought out the remainder of his time as an apprentice, secured help from editors who were willing to pay exiguous prices for correspondence, ignorantly walked to Washington for a passport, obtained notes of introduction and a benediction from Willis, and finally sailed for England with two young companions in July, 1844. He remained abroad nearly two years, learning German at Frankfurt, seeing Italy, mixing with the common people, and not like Willis with celebrities, enduring hardships, and writing poems and letters. On his return he found that his good-natured countrymen had read his letters with interest, and he was encouraged to collect and expand them into a book.

*Views Afoot; or, Europe seen with Knapsack and Staff* (1846) went through six editions its first year and brought its author praise from men like Longfellow. His fortune seemed made, and was, indeed, in a sense that afterward greatly discouraged him. The public began by considering him an interesting traveller, and continued to consider him one, in spite of his constant efforts to be known rather as a poet and a man of letters.

After a short attempt to edit a small newspaper in his native State, Taylor sought fortune in New York, where he soon secured employment on *The Tribune*—a connection that lasted practically for the rest of his life. He entered upon his journalistic work with zest; in fact, made it take the place of a college education. He continued to cherish his poetic ambitions, however; exchanged confidences with R. H. Stoddard, who was forging verses in a foundry designed for other products; and enjoyed such exhilaration—and it was not small for him—as could be obtained from the salons of the still provincial metropolis. While writing Californian ballads Taylor was called upon to proceed to the gold-fields. His letters were again successful, and in 1850 appeared in a volume entitled *El Dorado*. A preceding and a following volume of poetry could win him a few friends, a Phi Beta Kappa poem delivered at Harvard could secure the commendation of Emerson, a prize poem for Barnum and Jenny Lind could draw down on him the wrath of the seven hundred and fifty-two disappointed contestants, but he remained in the eyes of the public its favourite reporter and traveller. Meanwhile his inner life was really tragical. He had long dreamed of marrying a schoolmate, Mary Agnew. Just as

he seemed about to establish himself in life, she developed consumption rapidly. They were married in 1850, merely that she should bear his name, and two months after the wedding she died.

Seeking relief in travel, Taylor left America in August, 1851, and remained away two years and a half—a period chiefly memorable for his adventures in the Orient and for the poems that express his sympathy with that fascinating region. His letters and volumes of travel again proved highly popular and deservedly so, for although Taylor was no deep thinker or keen observer, and although his enthusiasm was not without a touch of callowness and perhaps of posing, he was a wide-awake, hearty man with a wholesome nature, a clear intellect, and a poet's sensibilities. His *Poems of the Orient* (1854) are often thought to represent him at his best, and even if as a whole, like all other compositions of their class, they seem factitious, they probably surpass the similar productions of other Americans smitten with the charms of a life so lacking in strenuosity and practicality, and they have merits of style and substance that warrant cordial praise.

The six years from 1854 to 1860 were marked by some journeys and several books of travel that extended Taylor's reputation both at home and abroad, but also by the harder work of lecturing. Much of the money thus gained went to the purchase of landed property in his birthplace, which finally proved a source of embarrassment. He secured, however, an admirable wife in Marie Hansen, whom he met at Gotha and married in 1857, and later at Cedarcroft they dispensed a generous hospitality which



did not find favour in the eyes of neighbouring total abstiners. Taylor retaliated in his first novel, *Hannah Thurston* (1863), by satirizing American provinciality and proneness to crass extremes; but his critics could not be reached in that way, and he was himself soon destined to have greater trials to endure.

Just before the war Taylor saw something more of literary life in New York, which seems to have been rather chaotic, most of the elder writers of distinction being either dead or else standing aloof from the newer men, few of whom had shown great promise. Besides R. H. Stoddard, his chief associate seems to have been the highly gifted and wayward FitzJames O'Brien, author of that strong, bizarre story "The Diamond Lens." Soon, however, there was no room in America for literary Bohemianism. Taylor made speeches for the Union cause, served as a war correspondent, went to Russia as secretary to the American minister, had an opportunity to open the eyes of Prince Gortchakow to the true state of affairs in America, failed to obtain either the Russian or the Persian mission, and then, restless and indefatigable worker as he was, settled down to novel-writing. *Hannah Thurston* was very successful—more so than its few merits warranted—and a year later he published the rapidly written *John Godfrey's Fortunes* (1864). This crude story embodied some of his own experiences, and hence retains interest, especially as a picture of literary life in New York during the fifties. Two other novels and some short stories complete Taylor's work in the field of fiction, which he did not cultivate with great seriousness of purpose. Indeed, his fiction would be al-

most negligible except in so far as it shows the trend toward unromantic treatment of American topics, were it not for the fact that one of the two later novels, *The Story of Kennett* (1866), is on the whole a more enjoyable book than the reader of Taylor's other stories expects to find it. Although its scene is thrown back about seventy years, it scarcely seems to be an historical romance, so faithful is the picture given of Pennsylvanian scenery and of the life of its quiet inhabitants. The semihistorical plot is not uninteresting, and although inferior to *Elsie Venner*, the tale may be classed with that as the work of a writer who, however amateurish in his fiction, is nevertheless worth reading because of his general merits as a man of letters.

But fiction had not lessened Taylor's almost pathetic ambition for success as a poet. In 1862 he published his pleasant, but rather ineffective *Poet's Journal*; four years later his elaborate and long-planned *Picture of St. John*. Lowell pronounced the latter to be the most finished and sustained American poem, with the exception of Longfellow's *Golden Legend*. This judgment is typical of the over-enthusiastic reception Taylor's kind friends, who loved the man and knew his aspirations, constantly accorded to his work in verse. And although the American public has not accepted the verdict of its greatest critic, that verdict was not entirely at fault. *The Picture of St. John*, which may be described as an artist's sensational autobiography in four books of abnormal *ottava rima* stanzas, shows considerable finish in its style, and in its descriptions catches much of the charm of Italian life and scenery. It displays no great invention or power of char-

acterization, certainly not so much as the later *Lars* (1873), a blank-verse pastoral of Norway and Pennsylvania, but it is sweet and readable.

Between these two poems, however, came the real success of Taylor's life. In 1870 and 1871 appeared the two parts of his translation of *Faust*, on which he had laboured with beautiful fidelity since 1863. In 1866 he wrote to a friend: "I design nothing less than to produce *the English Faust*; it can be done, I know, and pray to Heaven that I may be the chosen man to do it." Few literary wishes have been more signally fulfilled. He had the requisite linguistic and artistic equipment and the necessary devotion to his subject. Furthermore, for the first and only time in his life he was under no necessity to seek for the intellectual and emotional profundity which he knew must characterize a great poem, but which he could never attain. In other words, that support of a greater mind which Arnold thought Shelley needed, Bayard Taylor much more surely needed and found in Goethe. Thus supported, he surpassed both Bryant and Longfellow in their contemporaneous efforts at translating poetic masterpieces.

The rest of the story of this gallant struggle for literary fame is quickly told. In 1870 and 1871 Taylor's health more or less broke down, and while he still lectured both on the platform and at Cornell University and travelled and wrote as much as two or three less restless mortals would have done, he found it hard to keep his usual pace. Financial cares oppressed him and he abandoned Cedarcroft, going first to New York and then to Germany, where he gathered materials for a life of Goethe,

which had now become his favourite project. He still did some reporting for *The Tribune*, and as though he had not sufficiently tested his poetic powers, wrote an overambitious *Masque of the Gods* in 1872, and two years later an elaborate tragedy entitled *The Prophet*, to which the history of Mormonism gave a background. Both performances were brave efforts, lifted above total failure by his great talents, but far from successful on account of Taylor's lack of masterly intelligence. As though to balance these failures, to which may be added the lyrical drama *Prince Deucalion*, published just before his death, he wrote certain *Home Pastorals* (1875) describing faithfully and with the charm of pathos types of Quaker character that he had studied lovingly in Pennsylvania. Even if its inspiration and style are derivative, such a simple idyll as "The Quaker Widow" is worthier of remembrance than any of Taylor's more elaborate efforts, such as the "National Ode" which he delivered with great applause at the Centennial of 1876. His movements during these later years and his other literary works are not of special importance, although it is pathetic to find him attempting school histories and similar work, trying his hand at criticism, and publishing parodies on popular poets. He was comforted, however, by an apparent increase of his popularity; he really seemed to be taken seriously when, in February, 1878, he was appointed minister to Germany. The post belonged to him as rightfully as the Spanish mission had to Irving, a fact that was generally recognised. His literary friends sent him off with dinners and receptions, he was heartily welcomed in Germany, and entered on his duties with high



spirits, but soon broke down, and on December 19, 1878, died in Berlin while sitting in his library. His death was widely mourned, his letters and various miscellaneous papers and books were published, and, as one of his biographers<sup>1</sup> reminds us, within a few years a small cult of his poetry, somewhat similar to that which has grown up in connection with the work of his friend Sidney Lanier, was to be observed in parts of America, especially among youthful aspirants for poetic honours. But excellent biographers, and friendly critics, and disciples have not succeeded in securing him a high rank among American writers.

The reasons for their failure have been already indicated. His numerous books of travel did not warrant Park Benjamin's stinging epigram that Taylor had travelled more and seen less than any other man that ever lived, but they were not remarkable enough in style and substance to attract later and more captious readers. His fiction was always that of an amateur. His ambitious poems showed too plainly the strain to which they subjected him, and the whole body of his poetical work revealed, whether in subject, structure, or style, the influence of other poets—Bryant, or Shelley, or Tennyson. It was not his lot to perform a definite and original service for his countrymen, such as had been performed by Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, and Poe. His *Poems of the Orient* were exotic; his *Home Pastorals* suggested the better work of others in the same vein. Yet Taylor was not mistaken in believing himself to be a poet, nor are his

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. A. H. Smyth.

admirers entirely to blame for taking him at his word. He was a remarkably mellifluous versifier. He was almost never careless in his workmanship; he was always alive to the dignity of his art; and on a few occasions he was fortunately inspired. There are passages in *The Picture of St. John* that any poet might be satisfied with; there are at least two lyrics of admirable quality—"Daughter of Egypt" and the "Bedouin Song"—as well as whole poems and numerous stanzas of considerable excellence in the *Poems of the Orient*; and the idyll "Hylas," the touching, homely ballad "The Song of the Camp," and the Pennsylvania pastorals, to name no others, will probably have claims upon the most fastidious of future anthologists. Abler men than Bayard Taylor have not in the end obtained so high a place among minor poets as seems likely to be his.

With the exception of Whitman all the poets now to be dealt with seem to rank below Taylor and to demand much less attention than he. That they are rather numerous is not surprising in view of the spread of education and of the facility with which fair minor verse has been written all over the world during the past half-century. At the close of our present period war poetry was naturally demanded and supplied abundantly. Poets large and small, as such terms may be applied in American literature, as well as numerous occasional versifiers, produced a great mass of martial poetry which in bulky anthologies scarcely comports in merit with the magnitude of the contest, but in a rigidly winnowed collection would not be disappointing. If we exclude from competition such poets as Whittier and Lowell, the chief

laurels on the Union side seem to fall to Henry Howard Brownell (1820-72) of Connecticut, who showed some poetical talents in a volume issued in 1847, and considerably more in his *War Lyrics* of 1866. Brownell, who served under Farragut, witnessed the battle of Mobile Bay, and in his "River Fight" and "Bay Fight" succeeded in writing two vivid if amorphous battle lyrics. The first described the capture of New Orleans, which he did not see, the latter that of Mobile, in which he participated. The materials rather than the art of poetry may be discovered in his verse, but at his worst he is unhackneyed, and at his best inspiring. His best work, however, could scarcely vie in popularity with such pieces as "All Quiet along the Potomac," by Mrs. Ethelinda ("Ethel Lynn") Beers; the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," by Mrs. Julia Ward Howe; or "The Old Sergeant," by Byron Forceythe Willson. Nor was Brownell, or perhaps any other Union poet, able to catch the martial ring of what is probably the best war lyric in American literature, the "Maryland, my Maryland" of James Ryder Randall. It would be an ungracious task to attempt to determine which side was the more in earnest in the great contest, but perhaps there is a slight and a natural preponderance of intensity in the lyrics of defiance and regret in which such Southern poets as John Randolph Thompson, Dr. Francis O. Ticknor, "Father" Abram J. Ryan, and Mrs. Margaret J. Preston poured out their souls. These writers, Union and Confederate, are all mainly associated in the popular mind with the civil war, although in most cases they attempted various other forms of poetry; the poets now

to be considered wrote in nearly every case excellent war lyrics also, which constitute, however, a less conspicuous portion of their work.

Bayard Taylor's friends and fellow-Pennsylvanians George Henry Boker (1823-90) and Thomas Buchanan Read (1822-72), although poets of very different calibre and aims, may be treated together, since both illustrate the development of literature in the Middle States and also show how difficult it is for a poet to write even fairly permanent verse when he does not draw a large measure of inspiration from his own land and age. Boker was a native of Philadelphia, well-to-do, highly educated, widely travelled, possessed of genuine and rather large talents for poetical, especially dramatic composition. After a preliminary volume of verse in 1847 he wrote a tragedy, *Calaynos*, which, in 1849, had a long run in London. The scene was Spain; the motive, misplaced generosity; the dramatic type, Elizabethan. Its author was plainly a poet of more than average stylistic ability and intellectual and imaginative power. That his play held the boards and that his *Francesca da Rimini* of a few years later still holds them may be cited as convincing proofs of his talents as a play-writer. But even the last-named play, with its striking scenes and vigorous passages of blank verse, can scarcely be read without leaving the impression that although the plays of Shakespeare are a glorious possession of the Anglo-Saxon race, they have had a most deleterious influence upon modern poetic dramatists. Their splendour and complexity are inimitable, yet they have continued to allure poets who must necessarily hold modern audiences and conform to the mechanical



and other requirements of the modern stage. The result is a succession of failures, broken here and there by a successful *tour de force* like *Francesca da Rimini*. Of Boker's other dramas, which appeared along with some of his poems in two thick volumes in 1856, there is little that needs to be said. All are readable, and perhaps two, *Anne Boleyn* and *Leonor de Guzman*, may be pronounced really good. As much and more may be claimed for the poetry contained in these volumes, which have never, for reasons hard to determine, received their proper rank in American literature. Perhaps Boker made the mistake of favouring the public with too large a mass of exotic verse in a year of great domestic excitements. Passages of his overlong poem "The Ivory Carver" have been justly quoted with approbation, and one or two of his songs and ballads, like "The Rose of Granada," have become known to lovers of poetry; but the comparative strength and general excellence of his verse, particularly of his sonnets, cannot be said to have received adequate recognition. He continued to write, but, to his chagrin, scarcely added to his reputation, although diplomatic honours, the missions to Turkey and Russia, came to him before they did to Taylor. His later publications seem to furnish only one poem worthy of special mention, the touching "Dirge of a Soldier," written on the death of General Philip Kearny.

The career of Thomas Buchanan Read was essentially an American one, and if his poetry had reflected it more completely he would probably have continued to attract readers. He was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania, was apprenticed to a tailor, ran away and learned cigar-

making in Philadelphia. In 1837 he went to Cincinnati, was patronized by a sculptor, and in the course of a few years had passed from sign to portrait painting. He wandered about, painting whatever and whoever he could, and eked out his living in other ways. When little more than twenty, he began writing verses for Boston newspapers. Then he settled for a while in Philadelphia, but soon made his way to Italy, where he studied and painted for several years. Numerous volumes of verse helped to extend his reputation both in America and in England, and he continued his painting, whether in Cincinnati or Philadelphia or Rome, until his premature death. In neither field of art did his considerable talents make up for his lack of training. Although his *New Pastoral* (1854) deserved some of the praise it received for its descriptions of Pennsylvanian life and scenery, his long poems, of which he wrote several, were in the main facile compositions of slight originality and merit, while his numerous shorter effusions rarely failed to show what British master had inspired them. His fame must continue to rest on his spirited battle lyric "Sheridan's Ride" and on the lovely poem entitled "Drifting," in which Read's artistic soul for once came within sight of its ideals and succeeded in transferring to musical stanzas some of the beauty and charm of the Neapolitan waters and coast.

Boker and Read, with all their ability, did not furnish their countrymen with poetry that touched the popular heart. Where they failed Dr. Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819-81) succeeded. But it is one thing to touch the popular heart and another to hold it sufficiently long to force the attention and respect of students and trained

readers. Dr. Holland, who began his career as a physician in Massachusetts and ended it as the editor of *Scribner's Monthly* (now *The Century*), wrote long poems, among them *Bitter Sweet* (1858), *Kathrina* (1867), and *The Mistress of the Manse* (1874), which celebrated the virtues of domesticity in such an exemplary and unexacting style that they won him hosts of readers and admirers. He gave much useful advice to the same class of persons in letters signed "Timothy Titcomb," and he pleased them by sundry innocuous novels. It is, of course, idle to deny some sort of power to the man who succeeds in making himself a wide-spread influence, and it is creditable to the American people that their favourites are generally as irreproachably moral as Dr. Holland and the late E. P. Roe. It is equally idle to deny that while the works of such writers might form an attractive subject of investigation for a critic interested in psychological problems, they are hopelessly dreary reading on account of their utter lack of distinction.

In curious contrast to careers like Dr. Holland's stand those of two Southern poets, Paul Hamilton Hayne (1830-86) and Henry Timrod (1829-67). Both were natives of Charleston, South Carolina, the former representing the best blood of the State; the latter, whose father was a German bookbinder of poetical powers, representing a quasi-middle class of which the South has never been so destitute as is often supposed. Hayne was enabled to pursue his education with fewer interruptions than Timrod, but there was little difference between the aspirations and the general culture of the two young men, who shortly before the civil war were the brightest and most prom-

ising members of the small literary coterie of which the novelist Simms was the leading figure. Hayne gave up law for literature, and among other editorial labours conducted the short-lived *Russell's Magazine*, which, while not destined to vie with the contemporaneous organ of Boston and Cambridge, *The Atlantic Monthly*, not unworthily represented the literary life of Charleston. Timrod developed his poetic gifts while acting as tutor in a planter's family. Before the war broke out Hayne had published three volumes, Timrod a single one in 1860, a year too crowded with sinister events to be propitious to so sweet and delicate a genius. During the struggle Hayne took the field and rose to the rank of colonel. His health was undermined and his home destroyed, but later, in a cottage near Augusta, Georgia, he fought for twenty years a brave fight with adverse fate, publishing several other volumes of verse and some biographical prose. He never attained real popularity, but was encouraged by the generous recognition of his gifts bestowed by fellow-poets and some readers of the still estranged North. Timrod's fate was far more pathetic. He was not sufficiently robust to serve in the field, but acted as correspondent and editor and in a secretarial position until the destruction of Columbia, the capital of the State, reduced him from struggling to desperate poverty. His health was completely shattered, and he died suffering tortures of mind and body. His letters to his friends recounting his situation during his last years are among the most pathetic ever written. Those friends could not do much for his memory amid the confusion of the reconstruction period, but in 1873 Hayne edited his poems,



and at the very close of the century a memorial edition was issued. His ability is now fairly, though perhaps not yet adequately, recognised throughout America, and is appropriately honoured in his native State. Life gave the man buffets only, yet he would have chosen these and future fame rather than smiles and oblivion.

Of the two poets Timrod, though denied the opportunity of developing and of attempting many forms of verse, is the more impressive and will probably in time be the better known. His work is often immature, and if not imitative, at least marked by the influence of Tennyson, but it does not lack afflatus, and in a few instances rises to a noble and sustained elevation. The finely descriptive and impassioned stanzas entitled "Charleston" and the simple stanzas, "At Magnolia Cemetery," seem destined to endure as long as American poetry is read. The meditative and descriptive "Cotton Boll" is more diffuse but not less truly inspired, and the entire body of his work shows that he was much more than an occasional poet. Hayne, on the other hand, while he has left a larger mass of good poetry than Timrod, and while not a few of his poems, such as "The Woodland Phases," are worthy of being singled out for special praise, does not seem to have been fortunate enough to write even two or three poems that compel admiration from readers of every kind. His poetry, like that of most moderns, owes something of its finish to Tennyson, but this fact should not militate against Hayne's claims to praise as a careful artist. His sonnets, his poems of nature in her Southern aspects, his war pieces are in the main not far short of excellent; his "Legends and Lyrics" are full of good workmanship

and please, even if they scarcely thrill or charm; his elegies and other personal tributes, especially those that helped to reconcile North and South, prove him to have been as true a man as he was a poet. When one puts down the large volume containing his entire poetry one wonders why he is not better known and more widely admired.

In complete antithesis to these representatives of old world tradition stands Walter, better known as WALT WHITMAN (1819-91), who was born at West Hills, Huntington township, Long Island. He came of mixed New England and Dutch stock, and was one of a large, sturdy family. His father was a good carpenter; his mother, an excellent, healthy woman to whom the poet was devoted. While Walt was still a child his parents removed to Brooklyn, but the boy had opportunities to roam over Long Island, the beautiful scenery of which markedly affected his character and his writings. He received a common-school education and entered a printer's office when he was thirteen. Three or four years later he taught school and began to write for newspapers; by the time he was twenty he was editing a paper of his own at his birthplace. During the next twelve years he was a compositor and newspaper writer in New York City, and entered as fully as any man ever did into the life of the masses of the rapidly growing metropolitan community. He used his leisure to make friends with all sorts and conditions of men and women—haunted the ferries, hobnobbed with omnibus-drivers, frequented the theatres, explored factories, poorhouses, hospitals, and the homes of his humble friends. The metropolis in its larger aspects was his college, much as the

*Tribune* office was Bayard Taylor's. In other words, during these years Whitman prepared himself to describe the life of the American masses with a wealth of external details to which no other writer has ever aspired. He must also have reflected deeply on what he saw, and have continued the reading he had begun as a boy—reading in which the Bible, Shakespeare, the Arabian Nights, and other seminal books played a major part. He has confessed that he was a great novel reader; he even tried writing short stories himself, without achieving much success. But perhaps the music he heard was a more formative influence than the fiction he read, and his out-of-doors life, comporting as it did with his superb physique, counted for more in his development than any form of aesthetic culture.

In 1847 he edited a newspaper in Brooklyn. About two years later, at the age of thirty, he extended his field of observations by a tour—hardly a tramp—to the Southwest. He was an editor in New Orleans and studied the people there and in other towns and cities as thoroughly as he had done in New York. Then he journeyed through the swiftly developing Northwest and returned to Brooklyn, where he resumed his editing, but later became a builder and seller of houses. It was apparently just after his wander-years were over, in the early fifties, that his literary life-work begun to shape itself in his mind. Formal influences scarcely acted upon him, although in a way one sees that he had the transcendentalist belief in the necessity for a new literature to embody a new spiritual method of envisaging life. The direct influence of Emerson and other New Englanders

upon him is both asserted and denied, but it is clear that while he imbibed the aspirations of the epoch he did so in a way peculiar to himself. He had grown up in full sympathy with the bustling, progressive America of the Jacksonian epoch. He had mingled in its politics, its speculation, its material expansion. Democracy, not spiritual and intellectual culture, certainly not the foreign culture New England was importing, seemed to him to be the leaven that must lighten the national loaf, and instead of working downward through the masses his leaven must work upward through the classes. He was also near enough in point of time to the early generations of the republic not to have lost the belief that the United States is a divinely appointed agent of regeneration for the world.

Furthermore, Whitman's perfect health and strength, combined with a constitutional insouciance with regard to sin of any kind, turned him away from all sectarian outlets for his religious emotionality and increased his propensity, as a self-sufficing American, to chant the pæan of his own more or less typical personality. It was practically impossible for a man of his temperament and training to become a preacher in any of the new or old religious bodies that disputed the allegiance of the American masses during his youth and early manhood. Apparently it was equally impossible for him not to react from the narrow views of evil and good held by his contemporaries, and to pass to the extreme of sympathizing with the evil as well as with the good, of promulgating an all-tolerant religious philosophy, harmonious with his catholic democracy, of accentuating the prime importance of the indi-



vidual as the end and the beginning of religious, social, and political life, of asserting the equality of the female with the male, of the body with the soul. This complex evangel must be given to the world in a literary form—especially as it was to work upward rather than downward—and in poetry, as the noblest and most appealing of literary forms. But the poetry must be as little dependent upon the old world for its style as for its substance; it must avoid the stock poetic phrases—Walt actually spent much time cutting these out of his first verses; it must be uncramped by metrical restrictions, must be as fluent and free as the poet and the great land, people, and democratic system of life and thought he intended to celebrate. Such, more or less, was the evolution of the now famous *Leaves of Grass*—twelve poems growing as naturally out of their author's experiences as the grass out of mother earth. Whitman, as was appropriate, helped to print the book, and it appeared in Brooklyn in 1855.

Of course no such evangel was wanted by the public of Pierce's *Presidential*. Evangels and most other new things, especially in literature, seldom are wanted. Even if sundry now well-known verses had not treated delicate topics with startling freedom and directness, even if the far-fetched diction, the auctioneer-like cataloguing, the unassisted and unusual rhythms had not startled and scandalized nearly every one of the book's few readers, its mere and sheer optimism and ultra-catholicity would probably have exasperated most men and women in those years of gloom and sectional strife. Yet, although it had no sale, and consequently no real effect on the times, it was well that *Leaves of Grass* could have been written at that

juncture. It represented, crudely or not, as one will, the vitality and faith of the masses that a few years later sprang to arms in North and South and East and West. But the reviewers saw only the new, the bizarre, the egoistic, the blatant, the grotesque, the hazardous elements of the book, and they damned Whitman incontinently. He showed his manliness by pursuing unperturbed the current of his life, and Emerson and Thoreau revealed their manliness by giving him encouragement in his resolution "to go on with *his* poetic enterprise in *his* own way, and finish it as well as *he* could."

In 1856 a second edition, or rather expansion, of the *Leaves*, containing thirty-two poems, appeared in New York and practically shared the fate of its predecessor. There was talk of prosecuting the author; the publishers ceased to sell the book. Whitman continued writing, working for a livelihood, making country excursions. In 1860 a much enlarged edition was printed at Boston in which the most objectionable verses were grouped under the grotesque title, "Enfans d'Adam." It was at this juncture that Emerson took his famous walk with Whitman and calmly expostulated with him in regard to his overfrank treatment of sexual matters. Whitman listened in silence, years later confessed that the arguments were unanswerable, but was more convinced than ever that he must let his verses stand. What Emerson could not do with Whitman it is not likely that any reader or critic will be able to do with Whitman's disciples. The "Children of Adam" poems need, therefore, no discussion here. It should be remarked, however, that the time for upbraiding their author—if such a time ever existed—has long

since passed. No careful student of Whitman's life and works can now fail to perceive that he was thoroughly sincere in believing that his frank speaking was demanded in the interest of the highest morality. It was a part of his message, and it is permissible to maintain that his most questionable poems can have done few people harm, and must have done something toward shaking the hold of prudery and cant. It is equally permissible to maintain that his concrete presentation of this portion of his message was, to say the least, singularly open to misconstruction.

The third edition secured Whitman a few advocates, but the war supervened, his publishers failed, and the *Leaves* were out of print again. The poet practically ceased writing, but it is unlikely that any of his admirers will ever echo the wail Mark Pattison raised over Milton's absorption in the English civil war. Whitman's war record is the finest feature of his life and furnishes clear proof that the sympathy with humanity so fundamental to his poetry was equally fundamental to his character. He did not volunteer for the field—a difficult thing for a man believing he has a message—but after the wounding of his brother in December, 1862, he gave himself up to nursing, now in the hospitals at Washington, now on battle-fields and in camps. His own descriptions of what he saw and did—as given in *Specimen Days* and in a posthumous volume of letters to his mother entitled *The Wound-Dresser*—are not merely a lasting memorial of his humane qualities and of his remarkable power of physical attraction, but are almost unique as documents instinct with life. The very “form and pressure” of the worst side of war

could not be more clearly presented. Walt Whitman, the poet of "Calamus," the chanter of adhesiveness, of the love of man for man, may not be attractive to some of us, except when his "adhesiveness" develops into a fine cosmopolitanism. But Walt Whitman the tender nurse, the cheerer of hospitals, the saver of soldier lives, is much more than attractive—he is inspiring.

As a result of the strain to which he was subjected his magnificent constitution broke down in the summer of 1864. Recuperating from his illness, he began nursing again, and then was given a clerkship in the Department of the Interior. Shortly after, he was dismissed from his post because, as the story goes, the Secretary of the Department, Mr. James Harlan, after office hours, discovered a copy of the *Leaves of Grass*, at that time out of print, in a drawer in Whitman's desk, and, after having read at least the most outspoken poems, determined that its author was not a fit person to be employed in the public service. The Attorney-General, Mr. James Speed, took another view of the matter, one surely more consonant with the liberality of the Lincoln in whose Cabinet both had served, and gave Whitman a place as good as the one he had lost. A few weeks later, September, 1865, the poet received at the hands of his friend William D. O'Connor both a literary vindication and a lasting sobriquet. Mr. O'Connor's pamphlet-letter *The Good Gray Poet* reviewed the action of the Secretary in a style as caustic as it was unpoised and inurbane, and the era of Whitman worship was fairly begun.

The year following this incident Whitman printed his volume of war poems entitled *Drum Taps*. These were



descriptive rather than lyrical, and were not amenable to the charges of obscurity, colossal egoism, obscenity that had previously been brought against him. The poignant and noble elegy upon Lincoln, "When Lilacs last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," was appended as a supplement, and must have softened some hostile hearts. More hearts have, however, responded to Whitman's other tributes to Lincoln, his lecture and prose memoranda, and his throbbing lyric beginning "O Captain, my Captain," which, while it may not be so impressive as "To a Man-of-War Bird" or certain passages from longer poems, nevertheless makes one regret that this chanter of personality did not oftener utter himself spontaneously. Whitman, however, was of all men the one most certain to go his own way and gait, and it seemed best to him, while continuing his work as a clerk in Washington, to reissue *Leaves of Grass* in 1867 and in 1871, and to write in his unique style a poem for an exposition and another for a college commencement.

In February, 1873, a great change came over his life. He was incapacitated for work by an attack of paralysis, lost his mother, removed from Washington to Camden, New Jersey, with the prospect of being a permanent invalid, and was reduced to want, partly through the rascality of publishers. That he bore every trial nobly is sufficiently proved by many pages of *Specimen Days*—pages full of large morality, benignity, and an intimate love and knowledge of nature. The man who can read Whitman's descriptions of the summer days and starry nights that cheered him, or his tributes to his friends in particular and humanity at large, or his reflections on the deaths of great contemporaries like Carlyle and Emerson, without

feeling, to say the very least, that he has been in the presence of an admirable personality is certainly lacking in the qualities summed up in Whitman's favourite term, "adhesiveness." But unfortunately a majority of readers, it is to be feared, dip into *Leaves of Grass* precisely where the compost is most thickly spread, and forget or are ignorant of the fact that Whitman's prose contains, amid much that is naïve and crude, almost unmatched passages of nature description and superbly stirring pæans, prophecies, and warnings on the subject of democracy that deserve to rank with the best apocalyptic compositions of modern times. *Specimen Days* and *Democratic Vistas*, as well as the poems of Whitman's last twenty years, mere snatches of song as many of them are, may not in the eyes of most of his admirers count for so much as the more elemental, turbulent, ebullient outpourings of emotion and jargon that made up the original *Leaves*; but such admirers must prepare themselves to have their preferences challenged by readers and critics not a whit less willing than themselves to champion Whitman's cause against disrespectful scoffers and detractors.

Little more in the way of biography remains to be given. Disciples and friends increased and more sympathetic criticism was accorded his works, especially in Great Britain and on the Continent. He marked the centennial year, 1876, by a private reissue of *Leaves of Grass*, this time in two volumes, including in the second *Democratic Vistas* and other prose, together with later verses, especially the fine chant entitled "Passage to India," which had been added to the fifth edition. Shortly after, his health improved sufficiently for him to make journeys

in the Western States and in Canada. In 1881 a seventh issue of *Leaves of Grass* was suppressed in Boston on account of threatened legal action. The next year Philadelphia was less prim and more hospitable, and, besides the verses, gave the world the poet's autobiographical *Specimen Days and Collect*. About 1885 his health began to decline once more, and in 1888 death seemed very near. Rallying somewhat and cheered by the devotion of his friends, he published a new volume of verse, *November Boughs*, and a complete edition of his works. The celebration of his seventieth birthday brought him greetings from all parts of the world and was marked by a limited edition of the *Leaves*, which included a prose autobiographical sketch and the verses collected as "Sands at Seventy." Two years later, in 1891, the "Second Annex, Good-bye, my Fancy" appeared, as well as the tenth and final reissue of the *Leaves*. In 1892 the complete prose works were published, uniform with the latest *Leaves*, and on March 26 the poet, who on account of his premature grayness had long seemed more patriarchal than he really was, passed away, mourned by his friends. Since his death his disciples have been increasingly active. They have founded a literary organ and a Walt Whitman Fellowship, besides circles and other clubs, while a formidable literature of monographs and essays has grown up around his works.

It can scarcely be denied by any impartial student that much of the admiration which Whitman accepted so eagerly in his life, and which now brings smiles or sneers to many faces, has proceeded from persons not specially qualified to pass literary judgments, has been based on

personal grounds, is perhaps as much a subject for physiological as for psychological investigation. The attempt frequently made, however, to dismiss Whitmanism as a specially virulent form of modern decadence seems somewhat beside the mark. Very able and sane men have admired him, while the fact that his writings have not widely circulated among the masses whose virtues they celebrate does not in the least prove that they are a purely artificial product. It does prove, as Whitman himself seems to have perceived, that the democratic literature, about which he rhapsodized and foreigners have written learnedly, does not yet exist and cannot for a long time, if at all; but it does not militate against the claim that Whitman was in many respects the voice of a long-silent element of the people of the United States, that he interpreted their emotions to others if not to themselves, that he derived from his contact with the masses many of the essential articles of his poetic creed. Nor is it safe to discover traces of decadence in Whitman's stylistic and rhythmical lawlessness. Improperly absorbed culture has often produced eccentricities of style in American public men whose burly manhood was at the farthest remove from decadence, while experiments in the direction of a freer rhythm have been common enough in orthodox academic circles. That Whitman was self-conscious is obvious; he would have been an extraordinary exception in nineteenth-century America if he had not been. But his self-consciousness and the formlessness and oddity of his poems as wholes are no proofs of his decadence, while his prose stands ready to supplement his verses in proving that he was rather what we term, for want of a better



designation, an original. He illustrates in literature much of that elemental force which has made captains of industry out of farmers' lads and Presidents out of rail-splitters and tailors. Even when, as in Whitman's case, such men are endowed with great intellectual powers, their chief force seems to lie in their emotions. It is the emotional power of *Leaves of Grass* that wins devotees for Whitman. His poetry braces rather than debilitates. It develops a sympathetic reader's sense of personality, intensifies his patriotism, enlarges his sympathies, cleanses his brain, strengthens his body. The *Leaves* count for more in the increased devotion to sport and open-air existence noticeable in America of late and in the development of the idea of "the strenuous life" than many persons seem to think.

What Whitman's ultimate rank among writers will be is a matter upon which no living man is warranted to speak with confidence. The more we study him the more we perceive the impossibility of criticising him adequately. From an apparently hopeless jungle of jargon we pass without warning into a passage marked by superb rhythm, almost infallible diction, and at least vivid imagination. From a "barbaric yawp" of seemingly idiotic chauvinism we pass to a profoundly moving exposition of the dangers, material and spiritual, confronting American democracy. If we think that we can put a finger upon this or that defect of the poet and his work, straightway we discover a poem or a passage that necessitates a modification of opinion. In a word, Whitman seems not only a far better man and truer poet than his censors are willing to admit, but too large a man and poet for

adequate comprehension at present. He may turn out to be a mouse in the telescope rather than an elephant in the moon, but who shall take to pieces the instrument through which we view the literary heavens, when that instrument is nothing more nor less than—Time?

But although Whitman, whether because he is very great or merely because he is chaotic, seems as yet to defy analysis, it may not be amiss to attempt to point out a few of the merits and demerits of his work about which it is not presumptuous to express one's self tentatively. He had little respect for academic criticism and his disciples have still less. Yet no writer can forever elude classification and analysis, nor need the truly meritorious writer fear the results.

With regard to Whitman's evangel or philosophy little more need be said. Some of his stanchest disciples admit that his poetry is stronger on the emotional than on the intellectual side, and that an orderly system of thought is with difficulty deduced from his writings. His utterance is Orphic rather than Olympian. He challenges admiration rather than commands it. He may produce "cosmic emotions," but he does not mirror his age clearly and fully, as the greatest poets do. Yet he thought deeply, squared himself and his poetry with modern science to a remarkable extent, and strove worthily to fulfil his functions as bard and seer. It is not clear that he failed any more egregiously than Wordsworth and other poets with a mission have done—that he will not be saved by his better poetry rather than by his evangel. He may not have failed to describe and voice American democracy any more or any less than Balzac failed to make a full report

as the secretary of society. About these matters the future alone can decide, but it would seem that the present has a right to question whether Whitman was not, in his lack of culture, an exponent of numerous phases of cant. The cant of originality, the cant of equality, the cant of the natural, these and many other forms of the universal human malady seem continually present in his work. They limit its appeal to readers who find their ideal in a balanced culture, and such readers are continually discovering the bad effects resulting from Whitman's superficial knowledge of history. He had glimpses, but glimpses only of the facts and principles connected with the transmutation of culture, and hence, like many of his contemporaries and successors, was forever harping upon the inadaptability of old world art to new world uses. In other words, much of his life was spent in trying to expel human nature with a pitchfork. But he displayed an immense amount of interesting human nature in the attempt.

With regard to Whitman's style in general we may be equally brief. He seems to be as much the victim of jargon as of cant. His catalogues, his trailing lines, his blundering foreign locutions are as little spontaneous, as little appropriate to his purposes and subjects, as any mannerisms known to the student of pedantic epochs. They are scarcely signs of decadence, as we have seen, nor are they to be set down as mere affectations. They are far more probably effects of an inborn want of art, of a combination of overearnestness and underculture. It is worth noting, however, that they seem to produce on some readers a sort of hypnotic effect, and that during the latter half of Whitman's career he appeared to slough

them off to a fair extent. For this reason a beginner in Whitman might almost be advised to read *Leaves of Grass* backward. However this may be, it is surely a mistake to suppose that Whitman is throughout his work the cataloguer in jargon that so jostles the poet of "Starting from Paumanok" and "I sing the Body Electric." As for his free rhythm, it must suffice to say that this too has its hypnotic effects, and that it is on the whole satisfactory to many cultivated ears. Whitman loved music, and there is music in his best verse, which, if not precisely metrical, is not altogether lawless. That the compositions couched in it are entitled to the name of poems seems obvious, not merely on account of their emotional and imaginative power when the poet is at his best, but also because they do not often suggest the rhythm of prose. At least it is apparent to the student of Whitman's prose that its rhythmical qualities are different from those of his hypothetical verse.

Still less need be said with regard to the categories into which Whitman's writings fall. Perhaps the word "chants," which he was fond of using, covers well the mixture of lyric and descriptive poetry to be found in many of his pieces. The high, perfectly fused rapture of the ode is seldom to be discovered, but there is a rhapsodical strain in passages and poems that is no bad substitute for it. But his purely descriptive poems are those that most attract the normal reader. There are scores of them almost matchless in diction and in realistic power of vivid presentation. Yet it would seem a mistake to infer with some critics that Whitman saw only the surfaces of things. A large section of his work, includ-



ing the poems on male friendship entitled "Calamus," might be described as the gnomic utterances of a sheer idealist, and an idealist does not stop at the superficial aspects of life. It would be just as false to speak of Whitman's prose as mere memoranda, forgetting the highly wrought *Vistas*, as to describe him as a mere realist or naturalist.

But it is time to leave this perplexing man, who has suffered as much from the extravagant laudations of his friends as from the virulent denunciations of his enemies. If we must take sides, let us, as always, take the positive side. Purely negative criticism is especially dangerous in Whitman's case both because, as we have seen, the poet is large and inclusive enough to be either a cosmos or a chaos, and because it is so likely to be based on assumptions that beg the questions at issue. For example, to affirm that to Whitman the vulgar has appeared sublime nips all criticism in the bud. If one approaches Whitman or comes away from him with any such idea, one must practically assume that a considerable number of one's fellow-mortals have been worshipping Priapus for Apollo. It is usually a gross delusion to suspect others of being the victims of gross delusions. Besides, America has not enough genuine poets to be able to reject Whitman and minimize Poe. We need not suppose that Whitman will ever supersede Shakespeare and Milton, we need not discover in his works the sublimity, the humour, the philosophy, the new religion, that some people find there; but we can, if we will open our eyes, discover much that is inspiring and a great deal that is powerful in one way or another, even if we lament the absence of charm, noble

dignity, and many other desirable qualities, and are irritated by the obtrusive amorphousness, ruggedness, crudity, and blatancy that characterize so many poems. It seems best, in view of the conflict of opinions, to study Whitman with some of that disinterestedness he so seldom displayed himself, and to endeavour to appreciate what one can of his work. Such poems as "The Ox-Tamer," the third section of "Passage to India," "Of that Blithe Throat of Thine," "A Clear Midnight," "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," "On the Beach at Night," and numerous others, especially those that deal in any way with the sea, ought to make the new reader of Whitman willing to put up with the task of sifting much dross to find pure gold. They at least go far toward proving that Whitman, if he was nothing else, was a poet in solution and that, like his forerunner Thoreau, he was in many of his qualities strikingly Hellenic.

The years 1850 to 1865, as we have seen, do not represent an advance in the quality and quantity of the fiction produced by new writers, although they do represent a change of method on the part of the novelists and of taste on the part of the public. Cooper's last and perhaps his worst book was published in 1850, and, although all of Hawthorne's elaborate romances appeared between this date and the opening of the war, while the veteran Simms produced a number of his best volumes, it was soon apparent that the vogue of the typical romance was more or less over for a time. It is true that in 1854 John Esten Cooke (1830-86), younger brother of Philip Cooke and a cousin of J. P. Kennedy, published a colonial romance, *The Virginia Comedians*, that seemed to open for him a

promising career in fiction. Twenty years later he was bravely striving to utilize his war experiences in various exciting stories, and pathetically confessing that a new school of novelists had rendered the public indifferent to the highly coloured, faultily drawn work of the older romancers with whom he was himself affiliated. Indeed, the leisurely, old-fashioned romance hardly seemed suited to the new era of railroads, of fast ocean steamers, of telegraph-lines, of filibustering, of bitter political controversies. Immediately before and during the war all imaginative literature suffered; it had scarcely ended when new writers like "Mark Twain" and Bret Harte were appealing to a changed public with fiction vastly different in subject and method from that which had charmed the readers of a generation before.

The transition from leisurely, not to say slovenly romance to carefully wrought, more or less realistic fiction dealing with urban, rural, and frontier life, was not entirely due to the great change that came over the American people between the close of the Mexican and that of the civil war. It was partly due to this, partly to the influence of Dickens and Thackeray and other British writers, and of Balzac and other Continental writers, and partly to an evolution of American fiction itself. The year 1850 saw the publication of two books that are still read and have probably delighted more readers than the contemporaneous *Scarlet Letter* has done. These were the *Reveries of a Bachelor*, by Mr. Donald G. Mitchell (born 1822), better known as "Ik Marvel," and *The Wide, Wide World*, by "Elizabeth Wetherell," Miss Susan Warner (1819-85). They represent respec-

tively gentle sentiment, not to say sentimentality, and pietistic didacticism combined with a portrayal of commonplace domestic life and character. Miss Warner, a native of New York, apparently won her popularity because she voiced the religious emotionality and exemplary respectability of the American middle classes of her time. The story goes that her book would have been rejected had not the mother of the publisher to whom the manuscript was submitted persuaded him to print it. For a time the novel seemed dead, then it began to sell very widely both in America and in Europe. It still finds readers in cheap editions, and perhaps her subsequent stories *Queechy* and *The Hills of the Shatemuc* are not entirely forgotten. Of romantic interest *The Wide, Wide World* has not a trace; its style is mediocre; it is not a profound study of character. The fortunes of its young heroine with her invalid mother, with her crabbed country aunt, with her relations in Scotland, probably held and hold readers not so much because they form a story as because they realistically present emotional phases of life readily sympathized with. Miss Sedgwick had written irreproachable fiction for a prim public; Miss Warner followed with an appeal to a public increased in numbers through the growth of the country and the spread of education, and rendered more emotional by the development of religious and philanthropical activity. Such stories as *The Wide, Wide World*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Miss Maria S. Cummins's *The Lamplighter* (1854)—another curiously popular success dealing with low life and the fortunes of an orphan girl—could be recommended by pastors to their flocks as mental and spiritual pabulum.



Their hysterical, lachrymose, pietistic characteristics make them seem curiously old-fashioned to-day, but they increased the hold of fiction upon the public, and prepared readers to dispense with conventional romance.

This movement toward realism was, of course, part of a world-wide literary change of taste, but something like it would probably have occurred even if America had been completely isolated. Commonplace, emotional fiction would almost necessarily have been evolved to meet the needs of the American masses. American humour, as we shall see later, was contemporaneously evolving and was assuming a form not far remote from the realistic fiction that portrays types of provincial character. Sentiment and domesticity, dear to American novelists and their readers, had not, to be sure, been absent from the older fiction, but now the popular books of "Ik Marvel" (*Dream Life* and the rest) and the mild *Prue and I* of George William Curtis were to present them in a more delicate and attractive form. Thus we see that when in the early sixties an impressionable writer like Bayard Taylor thinks he will turn novelist, he instinctively satirizes provincial foibles or tells the story of his own experiences in literary New York, or describes with loving particularity his Chester County neighbours. Forty years before the highwayman and similar characters in *The Story of Kennett* would probably have been set in lurid relief. So also Dr. Holmes in *Elsie Venner* balances his grotesque subject by a picture of New England rural life that is nearer to the work of modern realists than to that of romancers like Longfellow.

Our period, then, if, apart from the romances of Haw-

thorne, it can boast of only one great work of fiction, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, is at least important to the student who is interested in literary evolution. But it is chiefly memorable because it witnessed the production of Mrs. Stowe's best works, and the short but not unsuccessful careers of Theodore Winthrop and FitzJames O'Brien.

HARRIET BEECHER was born at Litchfield, Connecticut, June 14, 1811—not 1812, as is often stated. She was the sixth child of Lyman Beecher (1775–1863), a strikingly gifted preacher and man, long a pillar of Congregationalism in New England and the West. One of her sisters, Catherine (1800–78), was a strong-minded labourer for the education and general improvement of women. One of her brothers, Henry Ward (1813–87), became in both a good and a bad sense the most famous preacher of his day, and during our present period won reputation as a lecturer, writer, and orator. His services in the last-named capacity in England, where he did much to turn the tide of popular feeling toward the Union cause in the civil war, form probably the most memorable feature of his sensational career. It is safe to prophesy that of all her brilliant family, Harriet will be longest remembered. She displayed from childhood exceptional qualities, both intellectual and emotional. She was an early reader, and in her case, as in so many others, *The Arabian Nights* was an enkindling book. She haunted her father's study and gazed longingly on ponderous volumes of divinity that were later to be useful to her in *The Minister's Wooing*. She was a precocious writer, and was not much more than ten or eleven when she had the pleasure of hearing her father commend at a school exhibition a com-

position on the question, "Can the Immortality of the Soul be Proved by the Light of Nature?" which she had written without his knowledge. Curiously enough, Dr. Beecher encouraged her to read Byron. The death of the poet affected her much as it did Tennyson, and she continued to remember the sermon preached on the event by her father, who was charitable and courageous enough to believe that if he and a clergyman friend could have argued on religious subjects with the wayward peer, the latter would have been set upon the right path!

While still a mere child Harriet was sent to her sister Catherine's school at Hartford, where she wrote a poetical drama, the preserved specimens of which show a rather remarkable assimilation of her previous reading. As an antidote to poetry she was given Butler's *Analogy*, which she duly mastered. In 1825 she was "converted," but for some time after suffered from religious melancholy, a fact which partly accounts for her overinsistence upon religion in her novels. Yet without this religious emotionality, stimulated as it was by the high pressure under which the family seems to have lived, and in particular by her father's antislavery enthusiasm, we might not have had *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In 1826 Dr. Beecher was called to Boston, where he strenuously upheld orthodoxy against triumphant Unitarianism. Harriet was not much exposed to the liberal ideas of the city, for she spent most of her time at Hartford as pupil and assistant of Catherine. In 1832 her father became president of a new theological seminary in Cincinnati, and Catherine and Harriet went with him to found a school. In the lively Ohio town Harriet published her first book, a school geog-

raphy, wrote lectures and essays, visited in Kentucky and saw something of a mild form of slavery, witnessed early riots against the abolitionists, and last, but not least, endeavoured to console one of the seminary professors, who had lost his wife. As a result she married, in January, 1836, the Rev. Calvin E. Stowe (1802-86), an Orientalist and biblical student of considerable learning, upon whose stores of knowledge and sense of humour she was afterward accustomed to rely with pride.

The years that immediately followed were divided between maternal and housekeeping cares and literary work, which, in the main, took the form of contributions to newspapers. There were domestic griefs and long absences due to invalidism on the part of both husband and wife, but although little definite was accomplished in spite of Mr. Stowe's encouragement of his wife's literary ambitions, the reader of her letters can perceive that she was being admirably prepared for writing *Uncle Tom* and, indeed, the rest of her fiction. For not only was she studying the problem of slavery from the vantage-ground of a border town, but she was developing that motherly tenderness and that sympathetic knowledge of all things feminine without which she would probably have failed to appeal to a large proportion of her future readers. Her period of apprenticeship was a long one, but it ended shortly after her publication of a volume of readable New England sketches entitled *The Mayflower*, which appeared in 1849.

The next year Professor Stowe accepted a call to his *alma mater*, Bowdoin College, at Brunswick, Maine. His wife's letters describing the task of getting settled in her



new home display the keen observation that afterward enabled her to depict so well the oddities of New England character. Meanwhile she was augmenting a rather narrow income and at the same time aiding the cause nearest her heart by writing for the newly established antislavery *Era*, of Washington. In April, 1851, the first chapter of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was sent to that journal, and throughout the year, amid many distractions, she kept the story going. The first portion of the book to be written was not its opening, but almost its concluding scene—the pathetic death of Tom. Like a true mother, she tested it on her children, and was encouraged by their tears. In its serial form the story was not widely read, and brought her only \$300, but when the next year it was published in book form, three thousand copies were sold the first day. It is difficult to describe the success of this most famous of purpose-novels. In a few years it had been read by high and low in America and England and on the Continent. The list of the languages into which it has been translated is portentous. It was immediately dramatized, and in one form or another has continued to draw thousands of spectators. Mrs. Stowe at once passed from comparative obscurity to almost embarrassing celebrity. She was bitterly assailed by the Southern press and as vigorously upheld by friends of freedom in all parts of the world. As spectacular a proof as any of the wide-reaching effects of the book was the monster address of the women of England to those of America, which comprised over half a million signatures and was bound in twenty-six folio volumes. The enthusiasm of these good souls may provoke the smiles of those persons who em-

phasize the inartistic crudities of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but a book that stirs the world and is instrumental in bringing on a civil war and freeing an enslaved race may well elicit the admiration of a more sophisticated generation. About one hundred and seventy-five years before, another woman of genius had written another pathetic book describing the horrors of slavery that had been for that age widely read. But Mrs. Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* had dealt with the fortunes of an enslaved African prince capable of heroic deeds of valour against his oppressors in a far-away South American colony, and the public to which she appealed was both small in numbers and not prepared to regulate its actions by its sympathies. Mrs. Stowe's hero, on the contrary, was a simple labourer who suffered martyrdom in the midst of a presumably civilized and Christian nation, and the public to which she appealed was immense in numbers and more or less accustomed to translate its feelings into deeds. Slavery's hour had come, and an exemplary American matron practically finished, in a literary sense, the work a less exemplary, but highly gifted Englishwoman had begun.

Mrs. Stowe's next important labour was devoted to putting together the documentary evidence with regard to the evils of American slavery on which she had relied in writing her book. *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared in 1853, and then the overworked author visited Europe, where she was received with much enthusiasm. She made many friends, among them, unfortunately, Lady Byron. On her return to Andover, Massachusetts, for her husband had accepted a chair in the seminary at that place, she sent out an appeal to the women of America, and otherwise

busied herself for the antislavery cause. She also wrote her second slavery story, *Dred, a Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856), which proved as popular as she could have wished. Many persons, including Harriet Martineau and Queen Victoria, thought it superior to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. That they were mistaken is shown by the fact that in 1866 the book was rechristened *Nina Gordon*, a title which is scarcely any more misleading than the first one, to which Mrs. Stowe afterward reverted. The slave outlaw-prophet, Dred, does not appear until the story is long under way, and then interest is hardly centred upon him, while the coquettish, somewhat overdrawn heroine dies long before the book comes to an end and carries some of the interest with her to her grave. In other words, the faults of construction sufficiently visible in *Uncle Tom* seem exaggerated in the more complex *Dred*. The sheer emotional power of the earlier tale was more or less dissipated in the later. Besides, Mrs. Stowe knew something about Kentucky, and next to nothing of North Carolina. Nevertheless, being a woman of parts and great moral earnestness, she produced an effective book containing several powerful scenes and not a little true humour.

*Dred* was followed by Mrs. Stowe's second visit to Europe, which, in turn, was followed by a domestic tragedy—the drowning of her eldest son, who had just begun his college life. She resumed her work, however, and late in 1858 began in *The Atlantic Monthly* her widely liked and good novel of colonial life, *The Minister's Wooing*. Lowell, then editing the magazine, prophesied that her fame would chiefly rest upon the new story, and

other readers agreed with him. It is almost needless to remark that, if this ever happens, Mrs. Stowe's fame will have shrunk to such small dimensions that it will make little difference what it rests on. *The Minister's Wooing*, which deals with the Newport life of the famous Dr. Samuel Hopkins, theologian and opponent of slavery, is probably a much better work of art than *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but the latter is great in its emotional appeal, while it would seem that neither *The Minister's Wooing* nor any of Mrs. Stowe's subsequent books is really great in any respect. Some of the characters in the story Lowell praised so highly are admirably sketched; the strong, pure heroine and her notable mother, to say nothing of Dr. Hopkins himself, are personages one does not readily forget. Mrs. Stowe is her father's daughter in dealing with her hero's ponderous theology; her womanliness, her humour, her ability to tell a story, her command of pathos, her conscientious study of the epoch in which her tale is laid are everywhere apparent. But it was probably an evil day for her when she thought she could make Aaron Burr a very dangerous seducer, and when, making use of a terrible calamity in the life of her sister Catherine, she introduced the element of a drowned lover, she would seemingly have done well to imitate Providence, and, as in the case of her sister's betrothed, let him stay drowned. She might not have pleased quite so many soft-hearted readers, but she might have written a book almost, if not quite great.

Her later life and work does not need to be considered in detail. A visit to Europe the year before the war gave her the inspiration for *Agnes of Sorrento*, which along



with *The Pearl of Orr's Island* was published in the midst of the struggle. She was beset with public and private cares during the four terrible years, but she kept busy both with stories for children and with the duties attendant upon a removal, for Professor Stowe resigned his chair in 1863, and the family settled for good in Hartford. When the war was over, a winter home was purchased in Florida, and much of the good woman's sympathetic energy was expended for the benefit of that South which she was accused of having traduced. Unlike most Northerners, she was by no means radical in her views with regard to the reconstruction of the South, for knowing the negro character as few of her compatriots did, she understood how foolish it was to attempt to build up a stable government without the support of the whites. Her most important book during this period was one which is sometimes placed at the head of her works, *Oldtown Folks* (1869). It is a less closely knit story than *The Minister's Wooing*, but as a picture of old New England life is superior to it, and is worthy to rank with the best modern realistic work. There is, of course, an idealistic, not to say romantic, element that may not appeal to some readers—the gay Ellery Davenport may be more convincing than the Aaron Burr of the Newport story, but he is not so delightfully real as Sam Lawson, Uncle Fliakim, and the other village oddities. Yet so pleasant and wholesome a book needs reading or rereading more than it does criticism. *Pink and White Tyranny* (1871) and other stories of more modern and sophisticated society need even less criticism, but for a different reason. Like her friend George Eliot, Mrs. Stowe succeeded far better when she

drew upon the memories of her childhood than when she attempted to analyze and depict the complex society about her. We may then draw the veil over her later books as well as over the ten years that followed the death of her husband, during which her faculties slowly but not distressfully gave way. She died on July 1, 1896, not least honourable because of the fact that she had blended so perfectly the functions of a public character with those of an excellent wife and mother and a modest, simple woman. The only possible blot upon her long career—her publication of *Lady Byron Vindicated* (1869)—was due to impulsive loyalty to her friend and to lack of judgment rather than to fundamental lack of justice and discretion.

Forgetting alike her false step in the Byron matter, her volumes of travels, her religious verses, her sketches, her juvenile fiction, and even most of her better novels, the great world appears to have decided to remember Mrs. Stowe as the woman that wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In this case, as in so many others, the decision of the world seems to be the safest one for criticism to adopt. Mrs. Stowe lives as the writer of one great book. She had the faculty of giving a fair amount of life to some characters, of sketching others very effectively, even if she frequently lapsed into caricature, of telling an interesting story. Her descriptive powers were good, her command of pathos and humour was very considerable, her intellectual ability was respectable and with regard to slavery and theology more than respectable, her womanliness lent charm and dignity to many of her pages, her style improved with practice and was at least fairly adequate to her purposes; yet we

have but to set Mrs. Stowe beside Jane Austen, George Eliot, and George Sand to be convinced that she was not an eminent author. Her art was not sufficiently sure, her intellect not sufficiently strong and deep, her power not sufficiently affluent. These deficiencies of the writer are plainly visible in her single masterpiece, but *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is alive with emotion, and the book that is alive with emotion after the lapse of fifty years is a great book. The critic of to-day cannot do better than to imitate George Sand when she reviewed the story on its first appearance—waive its faults and affirm its almost unrivalled emotional sincerity and strength.

Emotional sincerity and strength are to be found abundantly in the life of THEODORE WINTHROP (1828-61), and to a less extent, marred as they often are by singular lapses of taste, in his half-forgotten writings. He was of the historic Winthrop family, and was born at New Haven, Connecticut. Being connected on his mother's side with the Dwights and Woolseys, he naturally went to Yale, where he graduated in 1848. A post-graduate scholarship enabled him to remain another year for study. The next two years were spent in Europe, partly for the sake of his health. After some tutoring he entered the employ of the Pacific Steamship Line and was stationed at Panama. In 1853 he visited California and Oregon, and returned through the far West to New York. Then he did some surveying at the Isthmus of Panama, after which he studied law, and in 1855 was admitted to the New York bar. Literature was more attractive, however, than the law or politics, and he laboured faithfully on novels and sketches for which, owing doubt-

less to their unconventional character, he could find no eager publishers. On the opening of the war he enlisted with the Seventh Regiment of New York, and accompanied it to Washington. A spirited, if somewhat over-graphic account of the march was contributed to *The Atlantic* at the request of Lowell, who had accepted Winthrop's spasmodic novelette entitled *Love and Skates*. The description of the march suited an excited public and gave Winthrop a reputation which his early death in battle enhanced. He had been appointed military secretary to Gen. B. F. Butler, and as major he took part in the battle at Great Bethel, June 10, 1861. While rallying his men he was shot through the heart on the soil of the State he had just before described with short-sighted contempt. Finding the time ripe for the publication of works which their author had so carefully composed and revised, his friend George William Curtis prefixed a memoir to a novel, *Cecil Dreeme*, and the book was published in the autumn of 1861. A second and on the whole much better novel, *John Brent*, appeared early in 1862; a third, *Edwin Brothertoft*, an explosive romance of the Revolution, was issued in the summer of the same year. Two volumes of sketches, *The Canoe and the Saddle* and *Life in the Open Air* followed shortly, and the five volumes seem to have had considerable circulation. More than twenty years after, his *Life and Poems* was published under the supervision of his sister, but neither attained nor deserved wide popularity, although it was not lacking in interest.

As a man Winthrop was in the eyes of his friends a fascinating personality. As a writer he combined culture and experience of varied phases of life; he was bril-



liant to a fault; ebullient and energetic to wearisomeness; natural to the point of vulgarity. He gloried in efficient American manhood and idealized American womanhood. He imported into *John Brent* the untamed freedom and strength of the far West he had explored and made the novel, in spite of numerous faults of style and construction, a book to be read by all persons who love what is termed "a rattling story." Readers who love a horse as John Brent loved Don Fulgano will consider this praise far too tame. There may also be readers who, with the late Prof. John Nichol, will discover in *Cecil Dreeme* a distinct vein of original genius. Others will rather see in this unreal romance of New York, with its heroine masquerading as a man, its cynical villain, its impossibly mysterious plot, a proof that although Winthrop was a genuine American of a somewhat new and independent type, he was unable to free himself from the trammels cast upon him by the romancers whose spells had been practically broken in other literatures. Winthrop tried to break their spells, but had not strength enough. In *Edwin Brothertoft* he could divest Washington of prigishness, but could not refrain from setting a lurid woman in at least one literally lurid scene. Of one relic of the past he did, however, divest himself almost completely—to wit, a leisurely style. Nearly everything he wrote was spasmodic, explosive; in his efforts to be effective he forgot to be restrained. Winthrop was one of the first American writers to blow himself into popularity by means of a "breezy" style; he was also one of the first to prove, in his own person, that stylistic breezes soon subside. When the war in which he met so brave a death

was over, more fortunate writers utilized in a more artistic way realistic materials and methods he had bunglingly employed. Whether, if he had been spared, he would have left his crude work behind and produced thoroughly excellent, if not masterly fiction is a point that can never be decided. It must be sufficient to acknowledge his talents and his abiding interest as a transitional figure in the history of American literature.

FitzJames O'Brien is not so important as a factor in the history of American literature as he is in his interesting personality and in the curiously attractive quality of his work both in prose fiction and in verse. One naturally groups him with those other brilliant Irish-American journalists and poets Charles G. Halpine and John Boyle O'Reilly. He was born in County Limerick about 1828, was educated at the University of Dublin, ran through his inheritance in London, entered journalism there, and then, in 1852, sought to mend his fortunes in America. In New York he became a member of Willis's group and a social as well as a literary success. He contributed to John Brougham's short-lived *Lantern* and to other more stable publications, such as *Harper's Monthly* and *Weekly*. His "Diamond Lens" and "The Wondersmith" astonished the first readers of *The Atlantic Monthly*, and the young literary associates he drew around him, such as the poet George Arnold and the editor of them both, William Winter, the poet and critic, were fully warranted in looking upon him as a unique genius. But he was a thorough Bohemian who soon lost his fine looks as well as the fine clothes and other appurtenances of the man of fashion he at first succeeded in being. He did

not lose his spirits or his talents, however, nor his essential manliness, for as soon as the war broke out he went to the front with as much zeal as Winthrop and met almost as early and fully as sad a death. After displaying great bravery and earning the praise of General McClellan, he was wounded in a cavalry skirmish and died after a long period of suffering on April 6, 1862. Nineteen years later Mr. Winter collected his best stories and poems into a volume that has not received the currency it deserves. Few collections of the scattered effusions of brilliant young men prefaced by tributes of admiration from surviving friends have contained so little dross.

Even if O'Brien had written nothing but the forty or more poems selected by Mr. Winter, he would have deserved mention and praise for more than average talents, whether or not Pfaff's Cellar, where the young Bohemians of New York congregated in the fifties, would have merited literary immortality because some of O'Brien's inspiration was derived from that establishment. The author of the ode to the great arctic explorer Kane; of the realistic "Prizefight"; of that strongly imaginative trio of poems "The Skaters," "The Demon of the Gibbet," and "The Wharf-Rat"; of the sprightly "Zouaves," as well as of a number of charming, clever pieces that cannot be named, was as true a minor poet as any that we have had occasion to deal with. But he was also the author of some of the most strikingly ingenious tales ever written in English. Of the thirteen stories selected by the unsuperstitious editor, not more than two or three even suggest the commonplace. Many of them suggest the influence of Poe—one, "The Wondersmith," suggests

strongly that of Hawthorne—yet they suggest still more strongly the talents of O'Brien, who seems to have been one of those men that, to employ an apparent bull, with a little more power would have been much more powerful. The story of "The Diamond Lens" through which the mad microscopist saw and loved the sylph of the drop of water is often referred to and praised for its originality of conception and intense effectiveness, but it is certainly no more original and perhaps no more effective than the weird "What Was It?"—the ponderous, yet invisible, struggling something. Nor does one readily forget the aptly named "Wondersmith," or the pathetic, though less original "Golden Ingot," or the uncanny "Mother of Pearl." O'Brien may never be much better known than he is now, but he will surely never be forgotten in a country that is daily paying more and more homage to Poe and Hawthorne.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### HUMORISTS (1830-65)

It would scarcely be profitable to enter here upon a discussion of the distinction between wit and humour or of the psychological bases and fundamental characteristics of either. It would be almost equally unprofitable to discuss the much-debated question whether there really is such a thing as specifically American humour. The public both in America and out of it, regardless of the disquisitions of the critics, have accepted the phrase, "American humour" as connoting something specifically national, and in such matters the public is frequently right. No one ever mistook "Artemus Ward" for an Englishman or a Frenchman, and few persons have mistaken him for anything but a humorist, whatever they may have thought of the merits of his fun-making. On the other hand, a large number of American writers, including Irving and Holmes, while in some respects obviously entitled to high rank among American humorists, have just as obviously been affected by British or else by cosmopolitan humour, and are in so far not specifically national. Just where and how to draw the line between these two classes of humorists is an exceedingly difficult matter to determine; but it seems fair to say that before 1830 there was

little truly American humour, and after that date a good deal that Americans have some right to claim as peculiarly their own.

A moment's thought will show us why there is little need of classifying exclusively as a humorist any writer who flourished before the epoch of Andrew Jackson. A people who have humour are likely to use it in order to castigate all forms of eccentricity, and for a general, not merely individual, perception of eccentricity a certain amount of national self-consciousness and sophistication is necessary. Now during the years between the accession of Jackson and the death of Lincoln, America, partly in consequence of her own growth, partly in consequence of the severe criticisms of foreigners, outgrew much of her colonialism and provinciality—in other words, became more sophisticated. But she also rapidly outgrew the limits of the older States, and in the West and Southwest developed a crude civilization preserving many provincial features that furnished fair sport for satirical humorists. In the older regions also development was not uniform, so that sophisticated writers found around them much that was incongruous and eccentric upon which they could wreak their humour. This more or less castigating use of humour was apparently developed and strengthened by the fact that in all democracies there is a levelling tendency. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that American humorists have played a great part in rendering the masses of the people more and more homogeneous. This rôle was especially forced upon them after the accession of Jackson because of the great influx of foreign immigrants. Besides, no other period, in politics at least,

could have furnished humorists with more of those incongruities upon which their faculty seems to work. The incongruities between the pretensions of the new democracy to rule the fortunes of the country and its capacity to do so wisely, and between the theories of the Declaration of Independence and the facts of slavery, were almost bound to develop political satire, and this, in turn, was obliged to be more or less humorous because of the kindliness natural to a new people inhabiting a spacious land and comparatively unoppressed by class distinctions. Political humour and the humour of provincial oddities were, then, natural products of the Jacksonian era, and if the letters of "Major Jack Downing" and *Georgia Scenes* are now comparatively forgotten, we may remember that *The Biglow Papers* are not.

The mention of these humorous creations, however, suggests another reason why, after 1830, American humour should have begun a fairly rapid evolution. They were first published in newspapers, and the importance of the daily press increased greatly during the epoch of the first railroads and telegraph-lines, and of the great political struggle over slavery. Since the civil war the newspapers have continued to grow in size and influence, and it is almost needless to say that their columns have been hospitable to every form of humour from the slight joke to the "column" of this or that noted purveyor of fun. That, with the settling up of the country, the old "extensive" humour that depicted the eccentricities of the Georgia "poor white," the Alabama "flush-timer," and the Pike County (Missouri) Man, should have yielded precedence to an "intensive" humour dealing with the vul-

gar millionaire, the freed negro, the commercial traveller, the tramp, the suburbanite, and similar types is not unnatural. Such an intensive humour had long existed, nor is it at bottom specifically American. Even if its external form is national, this may in time become international or cosmopolitan, as the world becomes more and more closely knit.

The evolutionary process just sketched suggests that the more or less professional humorists who flourished during the period from 1830 to 1865 and shortly after that date culminated in a writer who is much more than a humorist, "Mark Twain," may be considered as a group under the designation of "socio-political humorists." They are rather numerous and must be treated in a somewhat summary fashion. Side by side with them more academic humorists, using both prose and verse, plied their pleasant functions. The greatest of these, Holmes and Lowell, have been treated in their higher capacity as poets; a few of minor importance will deserve a word later. But before passing to consider the main group in detail a few words may be given to the part played by humour in American literature prior to 1830, in the course of which we may be able to point out what those persons who believe in the existence of a specifically American humour consider to be its most distinctive characteristics.

The writings of the Puritans, as we have seen, were in the main precisely the reverse of humorous. Still the anonymous poem "New England's Annoyances" has traces of the grim humour with which the early settlers doubtless helped to console one another for their exchange



of material for spiritual comforts. Nathaniel Ward protested that he meant his fantastic *Simple Cobbler* to be taken seriously, and there are indications in the descriptive lucubrations of writers like John Josselyn, a credulous native of Kent, who paid two visits to New England and published accounts of the region (1672 and 1674), that the process of "stuffing" strangers—that is to say, telling them remarkable stories—was of early origin. With the increased secularization of the eighteenth century traces of humour become more frequent. The humour of the diarists Mrs. Knight and Col. William Byrd has already been commented upon. In 1708 a Hudibrastic poem of no great merit, entitled *The Sot-Weed Factor*, appeared in London. Its author, who wrote other satiric verses on the people of Maryland, signed himself, "Eben. Cook, Gent." By the middle of the century Byles and Joseph Green were amusing Boston with their puns and squibs. Before the Revolution Franklin had become urban and cosmopolitan enough to develop an admirable faculty for humour which he employed against his overserious countrymen and especially against supercilious foreigners ignorant of America and her ways. The sober manner in which he mystified foreigners by telling them grossly extravagant things about his native land may not have been essentially original, but it was soon to become characteristically American. His contemporary Francis Hopkinson, in his best remembered humorous compositions, followed British models, as did also the satirists Odell, Freneau, and Trumbull, but there are skits of Hopkinson's that remind one of the odd notions that three-quarters of a century later flitted through the brain of "John Phœ-

nix." In spite of Brackenridge and Fessenden and Royal Tyler the early years of the republic were not propitious to humorous literature, writers being either pompous and stilted, or sentimental, or wrapped in mysterious gloom. But there can be little doubt that good-natured Southern planters and shrewd Northern farmers and merchants, and especially veteran soldiers, "cracked jokes" and told stories, thus keeping old English humour alive, even if they did not specially develop new American humour.

In 1809 Irving's, or rather Mr. Knickerbocker's *History of New York* gave the world its first prolonged opportunity to smile or laugh at the creations of an American's whimsical genius. But although Irving's book was full of the exaggeration and the blending of the false and true which are often regarded as specially characteristic of American humour, Sir Walter Scott was not wrong in recognizing the American's obligations to British humorists, while the humour of the *Sketch-Book* and of Irving's later writings was that of Goldsmith, with a difference. Other Knickerbocker authors, Paulding, Drake, Halleck, Sands, and the rest, while not entirely un-American in their mild humour, obviously drew upon their reading just as Irving did, so that it seems fair to say that for forty years after Franklin's death no humour equal in raciness to his made its appearance in American literature.

But the young republic was growing in poise as well as in size, and the characteristics of Franklin were becoming those of his countrymen. A new form of humour, or, if one will, a widely diffused combination of old forms, was more or less inherited from him—a humour marked

by shrewdness, by exaggeration suited to the large scale of the new world, by a blending of imagination and matter of fact, of false and true, by democratic good-nature, level intelligibility, and lack of subtlety. It would probably be rash to pick out any one of these characteristics or any set of them and declare that they distinguish American humour from that of any other people. There is an anecdote in the *Arabian Nights* describing two disputants who "swap lies" before a kadi with an effrontery of exaggeration that no American could surpass. Nor when one finds the humorists we are soon to treat making rustics comment shrewdly upon politics in dialect, or choosing their heroes from among card-sharpers and horse-thieves, or putting fantastic, odd, and inappropriate speeches into the mouths of whimsical characters, can one safely affirm that these humorists have not drawn on Shakespeare, Fielding, Sterne, Dickens, and other British masters. Yet in the last analysis not only do American humorists use materials native to the soil, but the democratic contagiousness of their humour and its peculiar blending and copious, not to say inordinate, use of the ingredients specified above, seem to render their work unique. It is at least clear that much of it cannot survive transportation across the Atlantic, a fact which militates against its claim to greatness, but surely not against its claim to be considered specifically national. It is time, however, to consider the new humorists themselves.

They may be best dealt with, perhaps, in groups, according as their main subjects were politics, provincial oddities, and social class or type peculiarities. To these may be added a few writers of humorous verse and three

humorists whose genius was so prevailingly whimsical as almost to set them in a class apart. These humorists, with but few exceptions, are separated from writers of the academic type of Irving and Holmes by the fact that they were in the main men who saw many phases of popular life from an inner point of view. They were editors of country newspapers, printers, captains of steamboats, rural lawyers, Methodist "circuit-riders," soldiers, auctioneers, and not infrequently tried several of these vocations before attaining popularity as humorists. The ease with which the American transfers himself from one home and occupation to another has long been recognized as differentiating American society, in its broadest sense, from that of almost every other country; the fact that typical American humorists have been part and parcel of this mobile population, have written for it and described it, would seem to afford a fair presumption that the type of humour they represent is *sui generis*.

The first important political humorist of our period was Seba Smith (1792-1868), a native of Maine and a graduate of Bowdoin. He settled in Portland as a journalist and there married a very young and precocious Miss Elizabeth Oakes Prince, who helped him in his work, and after their removal to New York, in 1842, won for herself a wide reputation among the poetical flocks shepherded by Griswold. She was also, it is said, the first woman lecturer in America, and no more averse to preaching than her husband was to trying his hand on poetry and mathematics. But neither would be of the slightest importance to-day had not the husband, in January, 1830, bethought himself of a means of amusing his



readers and perhaps of paying off some political scores by making a certain "Major Jack Downing, of Downingville," write humorous letters in "Down-East" dialect with regard to political disputes then going on in Maine. The racy letters were instantly successful, were widely copied by the press, and were soon transferred to a New York daily, in which the "Major" appeared in the rôle of a confidential adviser of President Jackson. As "Old Hickory" had a "Kitchen Cabinet" of not profoundly cultured men, and as his popularity with the masses was very great, it is not surprising that the new "Downing Letters" on national affairs were for some time a source of delight to thousands, or that, when collected, they passed through numerous editions. The Mexican War brought the "Major" to the front again, and just before the civil war his collected wisdom was given to the world under the title *Thirty Years out of the Senate* (1859), which, it is scarcely necessary to remark, was a parody of the title of an important book by Senator Benton. During the Mexican War a greater writer than Smith instructed the people through the mouths of rustic characters; Smith was also surpassed in his own line by humorists of the civil war; but those of us who have been entertained by the letters of a certain "Mr. Dooley" as well as those who, in the distant future, shall enjoy the letters of "Mr. Whoever He Be," ought not to forget that "Major Jack Downing" is at least the putative father of the better-known public benefactors, or that Seba Smith was the true and legal father of the "Major."

He had, indeed, some difficulty, about 1834, in making clear his paternity, for a second "Jack Downing" had

begun to contribute letters to the New York *Daily Advertiser*, and the two Jacks were much confused—as to be sure they are to this day. This second series was the work of Charles Augustus Davis (1795–1867), who combined literature with the iron trade. His *Letters of J. Downing, Major, Downingville Militia, Second Brigade* (1834) are still worth a glance. Any one familiar with the details of Jackson's fight with the United States Bank will be likely to be amused by the description of the "Major's" visit to that institution and of his wonderful computations.

Of the humorists who cheered their countrymen during the civil war, the most conspicuous, with the exception of Lowell, were Robert Henry Newell (1836–1901) of New York City; David Ross Locke (1833–88), an adopted citizen of Ohio; and, on the Southern side, Charles Henry Smith (1826) of Georgia. The cultured Shakespearian scholar Richard Grant White also unbent sufficiently to publish a *New Gospel of Peace*, in which he described the war in a style that parodied the Old Testament rather than the New.

Newell, who was primarily a journalist, although he attempted other forms of literary work, wrote over the pseudonym of "Orpheus C. Kerr," and deserves the credit of having lightened Lincoln's arduous labours. His four volumes do not lack facetiousness or point, but are not so whimsical or so redolent of the soil as the letters of Smith, who styled himself "Bill Arp," and described the fortunes of the Confederacy in a thoroughly droll way. It is no wonder, however, that both are practically forgotten when such is almost the fate of Locke, whom Lowell called

“that genuine and delightful humorist, the Rev. Petroleum V. Nasby.” Locke was a journeyman printer, reporter, and finally editor of newspapers in Ohio. His “Nasby” letters began with the war and were designed to discredit the “Copperhead” Democracy—that is to say, those Northerners who sympathized with the South. The Rev. Mr. Nasby was represented as pastor of the Church of the New Dispensation, and made to give utterance to the worst disunion sentiments. He was in other respects as morally unlovely as the Rev. Mr. Stiggins, and was finally forced to leave even that nest of copperheads, New Jersey, in order to take up his abode nearer the promised land. He settled at Confederate X Roads, Kentucky, where he imbibed whisky on credit and preached to “simon-pure,” negro-hating democrats of the type of the inimitable “Deekin Pogram.” After the war was over he succeeded in securing a commission as postmaster from Andrew Johnson, and accompanied that President, as “Major Downing” had a greater Andrew, in the famous tour described in *Swingin’ Round the Circle*, which is still one of the most amusing books ever written by an American. Locke’s satire was at times too bitter, but the collection of Nasby’s diverting *Struggles* (1872) gives such evidence of sustained imagination that it seems a pity that time, while engaged in the good work of mollifying animosities, should be compelled to cast to one side so entertaining a book.

Turning now to the depictees of local oddities, the provincial group, we may mention but cannot appropriate Judge Thomas Chandler Haliburton of Nova Scotia, whose shrewd clock-maker “Sam Slick” could, however,

have been born in no other corner of the world than New England. For our period the main humorists of this group belong to the far South and Southwest, because, owing to the demand for cotton, those regions were then growing rapidly, and presented a great mixture of eccentric types. The Middle West, more orderly in its development, furnished a less fruitful field; trans-Mississippi humour began to reveal itself before the civil war, but reached its culmination several years after. The mention of the Mississippi reminds us that that great stream was a highway of humour. Coarse and jocose stories told upon its steamboats found their way into all parts of the country. The Southwestern humorists begot many of those who made the American people laugh during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Of the Southern humorists the oldest and not the least amusing was Judge Augustus Baldwin Longstreet (1790–1870) of Georgia, son of an inventor who launched a steamboat successfully but a few days after Fulton. Judge Longstreet turned the genius of his father into an indefinite number of channels. He graduated at Yale, studied and practised law, went to the Legislature, was made a judge, resumed practice, established and edited a newspaper at Augusta, became a Methodist minister, served through a yellow-fever epidemic, was made president of Emory College, Oxford, Georgia, accepted similar positions in Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and again in Mississippi, and preached, wrote, and delivered addresses whenever he got an opportunity. That such a man should have put life into his *Georgia Scenes*, a volume of collected sketches which seems to have appeared



in 1835, is surely not to be wondered at. It is more surprising that only two subsequent editions have been called for; not so surprising that its author, in view of his later piety, should have endeavoured to destroy all copies of the first edition. Yet his descriptions of country parties, horse trades, and brutal fights, and of the adventures of his hero Ned Brace, the practical joker, if as lacking in refinement as the people of whom he wrote, could have done harm to no one and must have amused his readers. His work was more realistic than that of most of his contemporaries, and he may be regarded as the fountain head of the humour with which later Georgia writers have regaled their countrymen.

One of Longstreet's editorial associates was probably more widely known as a humorist than his chief. This was William Tappan Thompson (1812-82), son of a Virginian and an Irishwoman, but born in Ohio and a resident of Pennsylvania, Florida, Maryland, and Georgia. His long career was mainly that of an editor, but he saw service in the Seminole and civil wars and had abundant opportunities to study life. His letters to a Georgia newspaper, gathered under the title of *Major Jones's Courtship* (1840), became very popular, and he continued the farcical adventures of his hero in two or three other volumes. A more artistic and hardly less amusing creation than "Major Jones" was "Captain Simon Suggs," whose adventures were described by Johnson J. Hooper (1815-63), an Alabama lawyer and editor. "Captain Suggs" was a blackleg of a type that could have been produced only in the turbulent "flush times" of the Southwest. His creator must have read *Jonathan Wild*,

but the American hero could have outwitted the English one. Another Southern hero as amusing in his way as "Major Jones" or "Captain Suggs" was the East Tennessean "Sut Lovengood," whose *Yarns* were written for various newspapers shortly before the war by George Washington Harris (1814-69), who was a captain of a steamboat, an inventor, and a writer on political subjects as well as a humorist of distinct ability. The writings of all these men may be only half alive—those of their numerous rivals and imitators are long since dead—but the catholic reader can still enjoy them and the student should not ignore them.

The only one of these Southern humorists who can fairly be described as in the least a man of letters was Judge Joseph G. Baldwin (1815-64), who was born in Virginia, practised law for many years in Alabama, and finally removed to California, where he became a justice of the Supreme Court of the State. His sketches of certain statesmen, entitled *Party Leaders*, is a readable book, but his *Flush Times in Alabama and Mississippi* (1853) deserves more than this mild praise. It describes the sharpers, the extravagant boasters and liars, the spread-eagle orators, the pettifoggers, the ignorant legal neophytes, the shrewd "saddle-bags" lawyers, their pathetic victims—in short, the various types of honest and dishonest, efficient and inefficient settlers attracted by the rich fields of the new cotton States. It is not a great book, but it is a good one; its component sketches are elaborated with care rather than dashed off; its humour does not degenerate into mere "horse-play" or farce.

The type and class humorists are too numerous either

to be catalogued or to be treated in detail. Amusement-makers of this kind are always with us, however, and the characteristics of such as are forgotten may, with slight modifications, be inferred from those of their successors. They have almost invariably been journalists, and about 1875 they were influential enough to be able to found several newspapers, primarily intended to be organs of fun. This special form of their energy seems to have declined, nor is it to be very often met with in the period we are treating. Still, George D. Prentice, the witty Louisville editor, who was also a writer of verse, was widely known and admired, and Benjamin Penhallow Shillaber (1814-90) edited a comic paper just before he made a great reputation by his *Life and Sayings of Mrs. Partington* (1854). This egregiously wise and respectable matron and the broadly humorous "Widow Bedott" of Mrs. Frances Miriam Whitcher were not trained to move in literary circles, and may be found at their own hearthstones by those who are curious to make their acquaintance. It is to be feared that few persons now care to make the acquaintance of the mild *Sparrowgrass Papers* of Frederick S. Cozzens or of the squibs and sketches of New York life thrown off by Mortimer Thomson over the absurd pen-name of "Philander Doesticks," with several initials prefixed and affixed. Fewer still, perhaps, desire to know anything of the *Charcoal Sketches* of Joseph Clay Neal, a Philadelphia journalist who won the plaudits of a great British humorist whose influence is to be traced in many of the writers we are considering, the author of *Pickwick*.

Not much more need be said about the writers of hu-

morous verse, since in Holmes and Lowell we have already found the best that America has to offer of this popular, but usually ephemeral, form of literature, which was not a little cultivated during our present period. Much American humorous verse has naturally been written in the dialects of the provincial natives, of the negroes, and of the foreign immigrants. With the exception of *The Biglow Papers*, most of it that possesses any literary merit has been written since the war. One of the most successful of these dialect poets, the versatile Charles Godfrey Leland (1824-1903) of Philadelphia, began his long literary career as far back as 1851, and published his famous *Hans Breitmann's Ballads* in 1868, when hostilities were not long over. Stephen Collins Foster, another native of Pennsylvania, who died in 1864, was one of the first and best composers of negro melodies, into which he infused some humour combined with a larger amount of idealized sentiment. His "Old Folks at Home," "Uncle Ned," "Old Kentucky Home," and "The Suwanee River" need no comments. For racier humour in verse, whether dealing with the negro or the uncramped denizens of Western prairies and mountains, one must turn to later writers. Yet one need not entirely disregard such amusing, if not specially American, verses as the once popular "Old Grimes is Dead," of Albert Gorton Greene, a lawyer of Providence, who was an occasional poet of some merit and the gatherer of an important collection of the works of his fellow-bards, whose rashness in putting their verses between boards he was too prudent to imitate.

As little need the numerous and once popular poems of John Godfrey Saxe (1816-87) of Vermont be com-



pletely assigned to oblivion. Saxe was a successful lawyer, politician, and editor, who possessed a more than ordinary capacity for writing easy society verse, mildly humorous tales and fables, fairly clever epigrams, adequate poems for public functions, and pleasant effusions of sentiment. He came far behind Hood and his other British models, but it was not discreditable to his countrymen that they should have bought and laughed over his numerous volumes. "The Proud Miss McBride," "Rhyme of the Rail," and "The Blind Men and the Elephant" have not lost their sprightliness. This has, unfortunately, been the fate of nearly all the once admired productions of a much more interesting and sprightly man than Saxe, Charles Graham Halpine (1829-68), who as "Private Miles O'Reilly" was one of the most popular of the humorists of the civil war. Halpine was a versatile Irishman who, after making a good start in London as a journalist, sought fortune in America. After attempting, with Shillaber, to make the Boston *Carpet Bag* a success, he went to New York, and there easily secured a livelihood with his pen. In 1854 he published a volume of verse, but won more notoriety by a hoax with regard to the resuscitation of a hanged pirate and by a lyric beginning, "Tear down the flaunting lie," apropos of the Stars and Stripes that flew over a ship conveying a fugitive slave back to bondage. Being a strong Unionist, he volunteered, and was rapidly promoted, while still writing his "O'Reilly" verses and skits for the *Herald*. His health compelled his resignation in 1864, and he received the brevet title of brigadier-general. Then he had a short, successful political career, but

whether, if he had not accidentally taken an overdose of chloroform, he would have lived to take a long draught of fame may be doubted. His two "O'Reilly" books, full of facetiousness as they were, scarcely rose above the level of bright journalism, and his *Poetical Works*, issued the year after his death, were a proof of versatility rather than of genius or effective talents. Yet the reader of his political rhymes, his parodies, his translations, which sometimes suggest that other brilliant Irishman "Father Prout," and his sentimental lyrics, such as "Belle of the Ball" and "Janette's Hair," is not unlikely to conceive for Halpine some of the regard that his friends lavished upon him.

Three humorists seem to be separated from their contemporaries by their possession of a vein of whimsicality which has influenced subsequent American humour. They are Captain George Horatio Derby ("John Phœnix," 1823-61), Henry Wheeler Shaw ("Josh Billings," 1818-85), and Charles Farrar Browne ("Artemus Ward," 1834-67). Derby was a native of Massachusetts, a graduate of West Point, a brave officer of the Mexican War, and an explorer of the extreme Northwest and of the Pacific coast. He died from the effects of a sunstroke received while he was superintending the erection of light-houses in the South. His burlesque sketches, lectures, and the like appeared in two volumes, *Phœnixiana* (1855) and *The Squibob Papers* (1859). They were very popular, and have held their own better than most similar productions of the epoch. That they tire some readers is not surprising, for it is not every one that can relish fantastic humour in excess. Still it is not likely that "Phœnix's"

ingenious proposal for a new system of English grammar or his San Diego French, culminating as it does in the charming phrase, *il frappe toute chose parfaitement froid*, will be soon forgotten. Nor should he be denied the credit of having introduced to the world the humour of the Pacific coast, and of having taught his countrymen new tricks of extravagant thought and expression.

Shaw was older than Derby, but "Josh Billings" was younger than "John Phœnix," and surpassed him both in popularity and in merit. Like Derby, Shaw was born in Massachusetts, where his father was something of a politician. After entering college the youth was seized with the Western fever and abandoned the slower East. He worked on steamboats, then farmed, then became an auctioneer, and finally settled in that capacity at Poughkeepsie, New York. His humorous contributions to newspapers began to come out in 1858, but attracted no attention. Then he changed his spelling, and with his "Essa on the Muel" in its new garb forced the public to smile. During the war he began to lecture, and strung his droll bits of homely wisdom together with as little regard to sequence as though he had been Emerson stringing transcendental verities or Alcott stringing "Orphic Sayings." In 1870 he began publishing his delightful and immensely successful *Farmer's Allminax*, and later as "Uncle Esek" contributed pithy sayings to the *Century Magazine*. As a humorous moralist, not to say a witty philosopher, he was not surpassed in his day, and is not likely to be soon eclipsed. Whether or not Shaw's bad spelling was a meretricious trick, the British critic who compared him with La Rochefoucauld was not altogether misled.

"Cunning, at best, only does the dirty work ov wisdom; tharfore I dispize it." The reader who ponders this statement will not make the mistake of despising "Josh Billings."

The last of the whimsical group is the only one of the humorists to whom this chapter is devoted that succeeded in making a foreign reputation. Browne is perhaps better known in England than he is in America—a fact, if fact it be, not altogether creditable to his countrymen. He was borne in Maine, became a compositor, worked on the *Carpet Bag* of Shillaber and Halpine, and contributed articles when not setting type, left Boston for Cleveland, Ohio, where he became a reporter, assumed the character of a showman, and began the writings that brought him fame. A short career on a New York humorous journal followed, and about the same time he gave his series of lectures, "The Babes in the Wood" and the like. In 1862 he crossed the continent, and returned to give his popular comic lectures on Mormonism. He broke down with consumption in 1864, but in 1866 he rallied, and in the summer of that year sailed for England. During the autumn and early winter he really won the hearts of thousands by his oddities of manner and speech and the irresistible quaintness of his wit. But success could not repair his health. He grew weaker and weaker, and began his homeward journey, only to die at Southampton on March 6, 1867. His not voluminous writings, which had been partly collected in 1865, were issued ten years later in a complete form. They are now comparatively little read, and many of the persons who do glance over them confess to being unable to understand how "Artemus"



could have so thoroughly delighted two nations. But as much of Browne's success depended on his personality, he is practically in the situation of many a by-gone orator whose fame is kept up by tradition, not by his published works. The men and women who heard Browne are alone competent to judge him, yet when one has read what his admirers have written about him, and has avoided under-rating the true wit and the fantastic humour of his writings, one is tempted to play the judge one's self and to declare that, as a whimsical genius, not as a broad, hearty humorist, he has had no equal in America. "I've been lingerin' by the Tomb of the lamented Shakspeare. It is a success." Who but an American, nay, who but "Artemus Ward," would have put it just that way?

In conclusion, it should not be forgotten that from the days of Irving America has had numerous writers who, without being professed humorists, have been full of humour. Writers of fiction, especially of novels and tales dealing with unsophisticated rural neighbourhoods and with fashionable society, have often amused more readers than they have excited. Hawthorne was a most charming humorist in his quiet way, Poe far less charming in his extravagant way. Simms and other romancers introduced into their books avowedly humorous characters, who occasionally lived up to the fond expectations of their creators. From the days of Sands the extravaganza or satiric caricature in the form of a slight story was considerably cultivated. Many of Willis's stories come under this head, and so do many of the once popular *Pencil Sketches* (1833-37) of Miss Eliza Leslie (1787-1858) of Philadelphia, sister of the painter Charles Robert Leslie and

the author of juvenile stories, cook-books, and a "Behaviour-Book"! Incongruity being a basis of humour, it is perhaps no wonder that Miss Leslie's story "Mrs. Washington Potts" is still readable as a satire on social pretensions. More refined humour characterizes some of the early works of George William Curtis and of "Ik Marvel," but, like their cruder contemporaries, even these genial authors have come to appear old-fashioned. Old-fashioned, also, seems the eccentric *Autobiography* (1834) of the famous backwoods hunter and Congressman David Crockett, but a sketch of American humour should not omit to mention so amusing a book. The modern reader may legitimately prefer the humour of his own day to that of his fathers, but he should avoid thinking that those departed worthies necessarily had a stupid time. Indeed, one might almost affirm that the American people have for at least two generations had a superfluity of humorists who have taught them to take even political corruption as a subject for jesting. On the other hand, it is equally true that there are times in the life of every nation, whether it be a monarchy or a republic, when the disposition and the ability to laugh seem alone to safeguard society. Democritus is a better patron saint than Heraclitus.

## CHAPTER XIX

### HISTORIANS, CRITICS, PUBLICISTS (1830-65)

IN many respects the period from Jackson to Lincoln is almost as much distinguished for its contributions to the "literature of knowledge" as for those to the "literature of power." It is the age of the greatest American historians and orators; it is to be credited with numerous important works in theology, law, political and natural science; it made a fair beginning in literary scholarship and criticism. It will not be necessary to devote a large amount of space to the discussion of men and books that belong only in part to the student of literature; but a survey of the achievements of these useful writers ought to prove interesting and valuable if only for the fact that their work in its utility seems characteristically democratic and possessed of certain elements of permanence. Motley and Parkman are probably surer of attracting readers fifty years hence than a not inconsiderable number of the contributors to more specifically æsthetic literature who have recently been discussed.

Of these writers of useful prose the most important to us are the historians, not only because their work is characterized, when it is at its best, by a high form of imagination, but because it seems specially endowed with

carrying power both in duration and in extent. The chief American historians have probably gained rather than lost readers at home, and have won more readers abroad than American orators and theologians and critics. Merely local history must remain local, and much American historical writing, while excellent of its kind, has not circulated beyond the bounds of the United States, or even of particular sections and States; but whenever Americans have chosen themes of wide historical interest, they have obtained an international reputation, and have held their own with historians of other countries. The same thing is true of American scholars in other fields, but their literary merits have been less pronounced. Nor do their writings seem to have produced the solidarity of impression that may be attributed to those of the historians headed by Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman.

The four names just given suggest the fact that when we speak of the great American historians we really refer to certain distinguished citizens of a particular State—Massachusetts. With the exception of a few recent historians, it is correct to say that three-fourths, or perhaps more, of the important contributors to American historical literature during the nineteenth century were natives of that State. Indeed, one can go farther and say that the Muse of American history has chosen the Charles as it flows between Boston and Cambridge for her sacred stream and the Boston Public Library for her favourite temple. It is needless to add that she has been often accused of undue provinciality. Are not the Hudson, the James, the Ohio, the Missouri, and the Mississippi greater streams than the Charles?



A high authority upon American history, Prof. J. F. Jameson, himself a native of Massachusetts, has given many reasons for this localization of historical research. A majority of them coincide with the reasons for the great literary renaissance of New England, and especially of Massachusetts, during the transcendentalist epoch. A particular reason of great importance is to be found in the fact that the libraries of Boston and Cambridge were better adapted than those of any other towns to supply the needs of such historical students as desired to rival the great European historians Ranke, Thierry, and the rest. Again Professor Jameson finds in the fact that New England was more wedded to political measures than to political principles a reason for her preference for concrete history over abstract theorizing and argumentation such as the publicists of the South excelled in. Another reason, which he does not emphasize, may be found in the fact that nowhere else in America, certainly during the first half of the nineteenth century, were creative culture and adequate wealth so likely to cohere in favoured individuals as in Boston and Cambridge. A taste for historical investigation is a luxury in which not every one endowed with it can afford to indulge. If Motley, Parkman, and Prescott had had to earn their living, they would have consulted fewer manuscripts.

Of the rank and file of the historical workers of our period, no notice can or need be taken. As we have seen, nothing of great value was published until after Irving turned his attention to the history of Spain, nor were Irving's historical works, important though they were as models of skilful narrative, great histories in the modern

sense. Marshall's *Life of Washington* and some good State histories, as well as the founding of historical societies, proved that interest in the history of the Revolution and of the new republic existed to some extent; but it is plain that for several years after the War of 1812 the American people were more interested in making history, especially in settling up the West and changing the East from a commercial to a manufacturing region, than in writing it. But in the third decade of the century the visit of Lafayette and the deaths of great Revolutionary leaders like John Adams and Jefferson not only gave the orators Webster and Edward Everett occasion to deliver orations glowing with patriotic praise of the past, but turned the eyes of the whole people upon the heroic epoch which had made possible their magnificent territorial and industrial expansion. Contemporaneously with Everett and Webster, Jared Sparks of Massachusetts (1789-1866) was perpetuating the fame of the fathers of the republic in a more laborious way. He began collecting and editing the papers of Washington in 1825. Three years later he made his first investigations in European archives. In 1832 he published twelve volumes of *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution*. The same number of volumes were required for the biography and writings of Washington (1834-38), ten for a similar service to Franklin. He had previously written a life of Gouverneur Morris, in three volumes. During the thirties and forties Sparks found time to edit a *Library of American Biography*, in twenty-five volumes, eight of the lives being from his own pen. This by no means exhausts his strictly historical work. Of his career as editor of *The North*

*American Review*, Unitarian clergyman, Professor of History at Harvard and president of the college, there is no space to speak. Such multifarious and pioneer labours speak for themselves. He was savagely assailed for tampering with his originals in the interests of elegance and propriety of diction, and was clearly not a model editor. Yet it has long since been agreed that his faults were trifling in view of his immense services as a stimulator of interest in American history and a preserver of important documents.

Sparks's contemporary GEORGE BANCROFT (1800-91) soon outstripped him in favour, and remains to this day in the popular mind the representative historian of the country in spite of the fact that for all his length of years and his twelve massive volumes, he carried his narrative no farther than the adoption of the Constitution. It was Bancroft's *History of the United States* with which the unwary Robert Louis Stevenson purposed to regale and inform himself on his first journey to California. How many other foreigners and less excusable natives have floundered hopelessly amid Bancroft's rhetoric and philosophical speculations will never be known, but the number must be large, if the copies sold were read. Yet, as often happens, a good defence may be made for the gulling author and the gulled public.

Bancroft was, in a more than usual degree, the product of his times, especially in his political ideas. He was a son of Aaron Bancroft, a Massachusetts clergyman of a liberal type, himself the author of a biography of Washington. Young Bancroft graduated at Harvard, followed Ticknor to Göttingen, where he took a wide

course of studies and obtained a doctor's degree in 1820, resolved to be a historian and continued his studies, returned to America and taught at Harvard, published a volume of poems, and opened a school. Declining to enter local politics, he worked away at his history, the first volume of which appeared in 1834 and was very successful. It was highly rhetorical, indeed oratorical, and full of the self-laudatory national spirit characteristic of the America of Jackson's epoch. This spirit was all the more attractive to Bancroft's first readers because it clothed itself in the garb of a liberal and inspiring philosophy of democracy. Bancroft was learned, full of a semipoetic fire, something of a popular orator, and a sincere democrat. He was just the sort of historian the American people wanted, although he was in his political views just the sort of person that the old Federalists of Boston heartily detested. He was soon drawn into practical politics, but did not on that account cease to labour on his history. In 1837 his second volume appeared; the next year he was made collector of the port of Boston. A third volume followed in 1840; then came twelve years largely devoted to politics, during which he served as Secretary of the Navy and as minister to England. The latter position enabled him to collect a great mass of historical documents, and on his return to America he was able to gather local material from every quarter. He took up his residence in New York, and issued his fourth volume in 1852, following this up by a volume in each of the two succeeding years. Then, his material seeming almost to overweigh him, he published instalments at longer intervals—1858, 1860, 1866. He was still rhetorical, philosophical,



discursive, but he had learned also to weigh evidence with the care and wearisome minuteness of the modern historian. He moved forward in a superb chariot armed with scythes that cut down his many critics, but he moved very slowly. In 1866 he was sent as minister to Prussia, later to the North German Confederation, and then to the German Empire, remaining at his post until 1874. His store of documents was again largely increased, and in the year of his resignation he published the tenth volume of his history, bringing the narrative through the Revolution. Eight years later two volumes entitled *History of the Formation of the Constitution of the United States* completed the work, and then the aged man began to revise the labours of a lifetime. The rhetoric was toned down, and the narrative was compressed into six volumes (1883-85). A short biography of Martin Van Buren (1889) and some orations and articles constitute Bancroft's minor writings. It may fairly be said that his whole life, including his political career, was devoted to the service of his country, especially to the celebration of her democratic virtues.

That there is much that is inspiring in this record cannot be denied. Crude as were Bancroft's rhetoric and his philosophy, they were genuine and generous, and did not obscure his many merits as a narrator, an investigator, a collector of materials. Every student of the colonial and Revolutionary epochs owes him much, and a certain measure of his fame is secure. It would be a mistake, too, to suppose that he was incapable of filling the higher functions of the thoughtful historian. But that he could continue popular, except as a mere

name, was impossible after the nation emerged from the callow stage. To consult him is often a necessity and sometimes a privilege; to read him is too frequently an infliction.

Bancroft's chief rival, Richard Hildreth (1807-65), also of Massachusetts, could not compete with him in popularity; but somewhat made up for this inferiority by the thoroughgoingness of his anti-Democratic or Whig views. Hildreth was a lawyer and vigorous editor, who found time to write books of travel, discussions of finance and morals, and antislavery fulminations. He made one real contribution to literature—the romance called *The Slave; or, Memoir of Archy Moore* (1836). In 1852 this rather overwrought predecessor of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was issued, in apparent rivalry with the latter, in a new edition under the title of *The White Slave*. Bearing this title it was not long since republished in England and, on the whole, in spite of its extravagances, deserved the honour. But Hildreth's chief work was his *History of the United States*, in six volumes (1849-56), dry but accurate, except in so far as his partisanship for the Federalists marred the second half of his narrative, extending from the close of the Revolution to 1821. The Virginian counterpart of Hildreth, George Tucker (1775-1861), has been praised by historians for the level excellence of his account of the history of the country from the Democratic point of view, but he has been little read. This fate has not unnaturally attended the very scholarly *History of New England*, by John Graham Palfrey (1796-1881) of Massachusetts, as well as the useful works of many investigators that cannot be named here. One Southern histo-

rian deserves, however, not to be passed over in silence. This is Charles Étienne Arthur Gayarré (1805-95) of New Orleans, who was both a distinguished historian of Louisiana and an able lawyer and man of letters. A complete account of his writings, some of which were in French, is unnecessary, but his local patriotism, his faithful scholarship, and his liberal culture demand cordial praise. A congenital exuberance slightly mars the earlier portions of his interesting narrative of the vicissitudes of Louisiana under French, Spanish, and American domination, and his attempts at dramatic and satiric composition are, to say the least, not happy; but one of his novels, *Fernando de Lemos*, could have been written only by a man inheriting some of the graces of old-world culture. This story contains, amid much that is crude, tales and descriptions of old New Orleans that would perhaps be remembered to-day had not more highly gifted writers subsequently revealed to the world part of the fascination of the Creole City.

The historians thus far treated obviously did not follow the lead of Washington Irving, but were rather the successors of the colonial and Revolutionary chroniclers. Irving himself was not alone in seeking abroad the romance that was comparatively absent from domestic annals. We have already noticed one or two writers who were attracted by the conquest of Mexico; but his was probably the chief single influence that led to the foundation of what may be called the second school of American historians, the writers, headed by Prescott and Motley, who have chosen some romantic or inspiring period or episode of foreign history and treated it with sufficient

intelligence, sympathy, and skill to make their works creditable and in some cases admirable contributions to the historical literature of the world. Connecting the national and the cosmopolitan schools stands the historian of the struggle between France and England for the possession of North America, Francis Parkman. It will be at once apparent that for the period anterior to the civil war it is the historians with foreign or semiforeign themes that attract the reader as opposed to the student. After the war for the Union developed the nation's pride and opened its eyes to the great interest attaching to the cause that led to the clash of the sections, historians arose, who, without sacrificing scientific accuracy, removed from the national school the reproach of comparative literary uncouthness. Colonial and Revolutionary history was also rewritten and made more interesting. It is only necessary to recall in this connection the histories of the late John Fiske and Edward Eggleston, both of them successful in other fields of composition.

The first of the successors of Irving to win a wide popularity both at home and abroad was WILLIAM HICKLING PRESCOTT (1796-1859) of Massachusetts. He was born at Salem, of distinguished stock, graduated at Harvard, suffered an accident that almost destroyed his sight, maintained with inspiring fortitude his determination to lead a literary life modelled on that of Gibbon, prosecuted wide studies, chose the period of Ferdinand and Isabella as the first field of his labours, and finally published his three volumes at the close of 1837. His own description of how some one read to him for hours at a time, how notes were taken and sorted, how he used his cumbrous writing



machine, is familiar. The work, composed under physical drawbacks endured, as Professor Jameson reminds us, by three other great contemporary historians, was successful both in America and in Europe, for the theme had been well selected, adequate materials had been secured and mastered, and the narrative had been admirably constructed and couched in a style of dignity and ease. Naturally encouraged, Prescott chose another picturesque subject suited to his powers of narration, and in 1843 published his *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, probably his most striking book from the point of view of literary excellence. Four years later came the almost inevitable complement—the two volumes of the *History of the Conquest of Peru*—during the progress of which the sight that had seemed improving again became dim. Meanwhile he had collected a volume of the leisurely, scholarly articles he had contributed to *The North American Review*, and had added to them a biographical sketch of Charles Brockden Brown, originally written for Sparks's "Library." This sketch shows that Prescott might have succeeded creditably in the field of criticism, but does not make one regret that he chose rather to devote himself to descriptive history. A short visit to Europe in 1850 was practically the only respite the famous author allowed himself from his next great task, at which death found him—his *History of the Reign of Philip II*. The first two volumes of this work, which extends only to 1580, appeared in 1855; the third in 1858, after Prescott had furnished a supplement to a new edition of Robertson's *Charles the Fifth*; the same year he was slightly paralyzed; and early in 1859 a second stroke ended his life. It may reasonably

be doubted whether if he had been longer spared he could have materially increased his reputation by completing a work which would have required greater insight into character and the movement of affairs than he was wont to display in his books.

Prescott's fame as a writer has probably suffered less during the course of years than his fame as an historical investigator. His narratives are still widely read and compared with novels; he still challenges comparison as a brilliant historical painter with Macaulay and Michelet. He is neither prolix and overrealistic nor extravagantly romantic. He is a conscious artist of the classical school, fortunate in the choice of two themes of almost consummate romantic interest. He can be read with pleasure and profit even by persons keenly alive to whatever deficiencies his works display, both from the point of view of the objective truth of history and from that of the subjective truth of artistic treatment. He is every year read with delight by thousands who have no artistic standards and fondly imagine that a historian capable of supporting himself on such an array of foot-notes must have said the last word on his fascinating themes. To hold one's own to this extent for over half a century, especially in the field of history, is an extraordinary achievement.

As an historical investigator Prescott has suffered more than any of his rivals. No one could have been more assiduous in collecting materials or more conscientious in their use, but his interests were pictorial and literary rather than psychological and scientific, and in the case of his two most popular books he had the misfortune of being forced to rely upon highly coloured and misleading

documents. He lived too early to make use of the results of archaeological research, and, in consequence, much that seemed to the historian and his early readers romantic has, to later readers, actually become romance. The imperial palaces which he saw in an imagination kindled by that of the easily deceived Spanish conqueror have dwindled to large communal houses inhabited by barbarians; but, fortunately, in his stately pages they are enchanted palaces still.

JOHN LOTHROP MOTLEY (1814-77) was, in both a general and a special sense, Prescott's successor, for he took with the latter's approval an episode of the reign of Philip II as the theme of his first historical work. Motley was born in what is now a part of Boston, the son of a prosperous merchant of literary tastes. On his mother's side he was as much a Brahmin as his friend and future biographer, Holmes, could have desired. He was precocious and well trained, and a general favourite. After studying at Bancroft's school, he entered Harvard, and on graduating there attended lectures at Berlin and Göttingen. At the latter place he formed a close friendship with Bismarck. After his return to America he married a sister of the poet Park Benjamin, and published a story, *Morton's Hope* (1839), which, in its fate, somewhat belied a portion of its title. Along with the colonial romance *Merry Mount* (1849), it is not without interest to the student of literary curiosities, and is important to the close student of Motley. Between these two failures at fiction Motley had had a brief experience of diplomacy at St. Petersburg, and of legislating at Boston, and had written articles for *The North American Review* that

seemed to his friends to indicate great talents. Talents, if not genius, had been probably visible to capable eyes throughout his externally unsuccessful career; they are plainly visible to the reader of his early letters. It may be remarked here that the letters of Motley, which were edited in 1889 by his friend George William Curtis, are among the most interesting in American literature. They deal, however, so much with English celebrities and Motley himself, especially through the marriages of his daughters, was so connected with English society that the two thick volumes are an international rather than a national possession. The writer's cleverness and the dinners and other functions he attends deprive much of his correspondence of great moral or psychological value, but the letters written during the civil war are worthy of a great historian and suggestive of a great man.

Motley's interest in Dutch history, or rather the beginning of his serious studies in it, dates from about his thirty-second year. After finding himself hampered by lack of materials, he sailed for Europe in 1851 and made a fresh start in his work. He studied at Dresden, The Hague, and Brussels, then went to London and prepared for the publication of his *Rise of the Dutch Republic*. Murray having refused it, Motley issued it at his own expense in 1856. He was despondent over its prospects, but unnecessarily so, for seventeen thousand copies are said to have been sold in England alone during its first year. What was more to the point was the unstinted praise he received from men like Guizot, Prescott, Bancroft, and Froude, to say nothing of Washington Irving



and Holmes. After a short visit to America the now famous historian returned to Europe to take up the narrative of Dutch affairs at 1584, and lay the foundations of his *History of the United Netherlands*. He studied again at The Hague, receiving both felicitations and assistance from Dutch historians. The first two volumes of the *United Netherlands* appeared in 1860, and maintained his reputation. Then the fortunes of his native republic took the uppermost place in Motley's mind. He wrote two letters to the *London Times* in defence of the Union, which had considerable weight and certainly relieved his intense feelings as a patriot and an enthusiastic lover of liberty. In the summer of 1861 he returned to America, and saw something of affairs at Washington. By the autumn he was back in England on his way to Vienna to discharge the duties of the mission to Austria. These occupied part of his time until 1867, when he resigned and went to London. The next year the two concluding volumes of the *United Netherlands*, carrying the narrative to 1609, were issued, and the exile returned home, only to be sent back to London in 1869 as minister to England. The next year he was suddenly recalled without sufficient explanation. He consoled himself with travelling and writing, and in 1874 published the biographical continuation of his history entitled *The Life and Death of John of Barneveld*. About this time his wife died and his own health began to give way. He lingered until the end of May, 1877, dying in the England he loved so well and where his body still reposes.

There has never been any doubt as to the brilliancy,

the thoroughness, the dramatic interest, the liberal enthusiasm of Motley's volumes. Even if one is disposed to rebel at the minuteness of the narrative and to question his powers of artistic construction as compared with those of Prescott, one reads on and on. He may at times seem to paint his portraits either in too sombre or in too glowing colours, but one does not cease to gaze with admiration upon them. He has practically all the resources of his art at his command—he can narrate an incident, describe a spectacle, analyze an intrigue, exalt a hero, and unmask a villain with a skill rarely surpassed or equalled. His style, while perhaps not strikingly stately, or rich, or swift, or easy, seems to suit his varied purposes, not infrequently flashes with wit, and is ever ready to swell into eloquence in answer to his generous emotions. Perhaps if one were forced to choose a single epithet with which to describe Motley and his work, that epithet should be "eloquent." Motley was eloquent because he was full of intense love of America and of civil and religious liberty, which he sympathetically transferred to the gallant little republic and to its and his hero, William the Silent. But eloquent lovers are not always to be trusted when dealing with men and events they do not admire. Thus it is that Dutch historians, while conceding Motley's brilliant and thorough scholarship, have felt obliged to point out his partisanship, especially against the Calvinists. Of late Motley's countrymen have not felt it necessary to defend him through thick and thin on points that only Dutch scholars are competent to deal with. Nor does one need to be very scholarly in order to perceive that Motley was not altogether qualified to do justice to Spaniards. But as so

often happens, the excess of his zeal in defence of his own principles and ideals endears him to his many admirers.

Prescott, dying before the civil war, seems almost to take his place with Irving, who survived him; Motley seems much nearer to us, but his is also a receding figure; FRANCIS PARKMAN (1823-93) of Boston was about nine years Motley's junior, but as he survived until 1893, and as in his methods of research he became as modern as any conductor of an historical seminary in a Germanized university, he seems almost to belong to our own generation. Like the other Massachusetts historians, he came of good ancestors and was graduated at Harvard. As a delicate boy he was allowed to run wild in the country, and thus acquired a deep love for nature and for forest life. Instead, therefore, of repeating after graduation a former sojourn in Europe, he began from St. Louis in 1846 an exploration of the Western wilderness. He lived for some time in a Sioux village, and learned much of the ways of Indians and trappers. In 1847 he collected into a volume magazine articles giving an account of his adventures. This modest, straightforward book, entitled *The Oregon Trail*, was written in a charming style, and was full of good portraits, picturesque descriptions, and intimate knowledge and love of natural beauty. To this day it retains its freshness and is likely to remain the classic source of information with regard to the far West at the interesting period of its transference from the hands of Nature to those of civilized man. It was not specially marked by humour or by illuminating ideas, but it gave promise of a great literary career, not least in those

pages which described Parkman's own sufferings from exposure and disease.

His health never recovered from the effects of this adventurous journey, but throughout his life he displayed a heroism comparable with Prescott's. Several years were completely lost, and when he could work he could not read or write more than a few minutes at a time. Nearly two hundred folio volumes of documents which he could fortunately afford to have copied for him were read aloud to him, and from this material, and an enormous mass of printed sources, he gathered the information that enabled him to fill eleven volumes of his own. Into those volumes, however, went his early experiences in the wilderness, his extensive topographical studies prosecuted wherever the scene of his narrative called him, his personal explorations in European archives, and his never-failing observation of nature. The result was a series of volumes giving a connected history of the most important episode in American development between the discovery of the continent and the Revolutionary War. Every phase of the struggle between France and Great Britain for supremacy in the new world was investigated with a minute skill not surpassed by that of Motley, every actor in the drama was closely studied and vividly presented, every scene was painted with as much truth of detail as was attainable. In other words, Parkman, as we have already seen, by choosing a theme of great importance to Americans, placed himself at the head of the school of national historians, and at the same time, by choosing a subject full of picturesqueness and romance and old-world interest, allied himself with the cosmopolitan school.



Through the thoroughness of his treatment he satisfied the requirements of the student, and through the brilliancy of his artistic presentation he made a deep appeal to the lover of literature. In consequence he has been ranked by many persons as the greatest of American historians. He has, at least, fascinated more modern readers of exigent taste than any of his rivals, and has furnished more materials to modern novelists. His descriptions of the Indians and the trappers, of the *coureurs de bois* and the heroic Jesuit missionaries, of transplanted nobles of the old *régime* and plain-spun provincial rangers, of voyages down unknown streams and the march of armies through sunless forests, are so enthralling that one forgets to question whether the historian is not often prodigal of his powers of description and of his minute learning, as well as to remember that after all one is not reading an epic but only an episode in an epic-like history.

Criticism of the separate volumes would be out of place here. The series was not begun in earnest until after the appearance, in 1851, of two volumes dealing with the Indian revolt of 1763 which followed the fall of Quebec. This work, entitled *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*, while excellent of its kind, cannot hold its own either in style or in technique with such later volumes as those entitled *Montcalm and Wolfe* (1884). Parkman's style was chastened with practice until it became in its blending of charm and power and flexibility almost unrivalled among the American authors of his epoch. His powers of analysis, of research, of ordering his materials developed to an extent that will be fully appreciated only by the reader who studies carefully such admirable chapters in the last-named book

as the opening description of Europe at the beginning of the Seven Years' War, the unravelling of the situation in Acadia, and the portraits of Montcalm and Bigot. It would be a mistake, however, to speak of *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* save with great respect, and some readers may find its earlier chapters describing the Indian tribes and the whole French and English struggle the most useful portion of Parkman's entire writings. Only the names of the later volumes can be given. Fourteen years elapsed before the publication of *Pioneers of France in the New World* (1865). Then came *The Jesuits in North America* (1867); *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West* (1869); *The Old Régime in Canada* (1874)—Parkman's most philosophical piece of work, according to Mr. Fiske; *Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV* (1877); and *A Half-Century of Conflict* (1892). The concluding portion of the narrative is, of course, the *Montcalm and Wolfe* already mentioned. Besides this noble group of books Parkman, who was devoted to flowers and once served as Professor of Horticulture at Harvard, wrote a work on roses, and also, earlier in his career, attempted a novel. This was entitled *Vassall Morton* (1856), and was a curious performance containing autobiographical touches, descriptions of Harvard life, and wildly romantic incidents, such as the imprisonment of the hero in an Austrian dungeon through the machinations of his rival in love. That the book is deservedly little known is amusingly shown by the fact that in a sketch of the Parkman he so admired John Fiske called it an historical novel. On the contrary, its hero lived late enough to show his bravery by preventing the destruc-

tion of a railroad train, and its author evidently thought that he was holding a mirror up to the American life of his day. His mirror was better adapted, however, to reflect the life of the past.

The task of ranking the three great historians that have just been briefly discussed is not an easy one. Parkman's theme has special attractions for Americans and is not devoid of interest to the rest of the world, but in some ways it is not so impressive as Motley's, or so well proportioned and compact as Prescott's two popular themes. If Parkman's narratives have the charm of spaciousness, those of Motley have that of the magnified little, if we may so express it. If Parkman's work is picturesque and romantic, Prescott's is also, and with an added element of stateliness, perhaps of gorgeousness. Neither Parkman nor Prescott has Motley's lift or elevation springing from his enthusiasm for liberty, and from the fact that he has a hero of truly noble proportions. Religious and political freedom may be said to be as much Motley's themes as the fortunes of the Dutch, and while Parkman also treats a phase of the history of liberty, this bearing of his work is not so vividly present to a reader's mind as is the case with Motley's volumes. Parkman probably paints fairer portraits than Motley does, but Motley's, as befits a historian not uninfluenced by Macaulay, seem more striking and are naturally more complex. The movements and intrigues with which Motley deals are more subtle than those that occupy Parkman, while the latter is more concerned with such matters and handles them better than Prescott. On the other hand, both Motley and Parkman seem possibly too lavish in

their use of details, and Parkman suffers through the fact that there is an element of sameness in his frequent accounts of forest assaults and Indian tortures. Prescott is comparatively unamenable to the charge of diffuseness and, perhaps, in sheer artistic power, though certainly not in scientific thoroughness and philosophical depth, is superior to his rivals. If he had been fifteen or twenty years younger he might have forced them both to look more closely to their laurels. But, after all, grateful readers should have an abundance of laurels to distribute to the three.

The transition from history to literary scholarship and criticism is rendered especially easy and natural when the career of GEORGE TICKNOR (1791-1871) is recalled. His famous *History of Spanish Literature* (1849) connects him with the cosmopolitan historians; his biography of Prescott (1864) brings him still nearer to them; his own *Life, Letters, and Journals* (1876) have long since taken their place among the most interesting works of their kind. Even more than Motley's correspondence they belong to England and Europe as much as to America, for Ticknor during his long life made the acquaintance of an astonishing number of great men. Yet the volumes would have been interesting had they dealt with Ticknor alone. He was born at Boston, the son of an educator, merchant, and philanthropist, and profited from every phase of his father's career. A precocious reader, he graduated from Dartmouth in 1807, then studied at home, and in 1813 was admitted to the bar. But the life of the student and man of letters proved too attractive, and he soon resolved to go to Germany in order to train



himself to lead it. The carrying out of this resolution made Ticknor the first American scholar in the technical sense of the word, and its formation was all the more creditable to him because, young as he was, he was already looked upon as a "literary light." He had even been associated with distinguished lawyers in the editing of the sermons of the famous Buckminster! He was led to think of Germany as a place of study through Mme. de Staël, and through a pamphlet and a favourable account of its library he was attracted to Göttingen. Wishing to learn a little German, he had recourse to an Alsatian teacher of mathematics, borrowed a French-German grammar, secured a copy of *Werther* from John Quincy Adams's library, and sent to New Hampshire to borrow a German dictionary. Such were the difficulties of a would-be scholar in the Boston of 1814. During the winter of 1814-15 Ticknor travelled South as far as Virginia, and saw in men like Jefferson, Madison, and John Randolph the flower of a civilization very different from that in which he had grown up, and from that to which he was soon to be introduced. In April, 1815, he sailed for England, where he began his list of foreign friends with those very dissimilar personages, Roscoe, Dr. Parr, and Lord Byron. He studied two years at Göttingen, then travelled for two more. Returning in 1819, with a large stock of books, he began his duties as Professor of Modern Languages and Literatures at Harvard. His lectures seem to have been a sort of revelation, and his pedagogical acumen would have worked a revolution in the college methods had he been given a free hand. As we have already seen, he resigned his chair to Longfellow in 1835. His subse-

quent visits to Europe, his great labours upon Spanish literature, his services in helping to found the Boston Public Library and his gift to it of his Spanish books, his encouragement of American scholars and his patriotic interest in the fortunes of his country are topics that cannot detain us, but may well be pondered by the readers of his biography. He was not a great man, if greatness be inseparable from brilliance; but if to be an inspiring force in life and literature gives a man a claim to greatness, few of his contemporaries better deserve the epithet. His *History of Spanish Literature* is oftener termed great than he is, and, in its way, deserves the epithet also, although it is slowly becoming antiquated. For its day it was thorough, solid, erudite; in short, everything it should have been except illuminating and interesting. It still remains the widest survey of its subject, but has been considerably augmented and corrected by the labours of later scholars. From the point of view of the reader it is a monument to its author, and comes near being one to its subject. It is one of those books which it is a credit to have written, and almost as much to have read. But it is the privilege of industrious scholarship to be dull, and frivolous persons can always fall back on the delightful *Life, Letters, and Journals*.

The reader will have gathered that criticism proper did not altogether flourish during the present period. The pathetic efforts of Griswold to encourage native writers, the more discriminating labours of Margaret Fuller and her group, and the unbalanced but serviceable onslaughts of Poe have been sufficiently described. Occasionally a volume of collected reviews, such as those of the romancer

Simms, may have attracted a few readers, but, on the whole, disinterested scholarly criticism of a high type was certainly scarce in America prior to the civil war. Lowell had, of course, made a beginning as a critic, and his friend the late Prof. Francis J. Child (1825-96) of Harvard had begun to work upon his great collection of the English and Scotch ballads. Two brothers, Evert A. and George L. Duyckinck of New York, in their *Cyclopædia of American Literature*, and Dr. Samuel Austin Allibone, in his laborious *Dictionary of British and American Authors*, had been useful pioneers of their kind. Many of the lyceum lecturers dealt with literary subjects, and some of them, like the Rev. Henry N. Hudson, greatly stimulated the reading of Shakespeare. A like service was done to Wordsworth by the editorial and critical labours of Prof. Henry Reed. All this was of incalculable value to a new country filled with alert but only slightly trained readers and thinkers. Yet it was neither criticism nor literature of a high order, and need not be dwelt upon.

The career of the Shakespearian student Hudson (1814-86) is, however, worthy of at least a moment's consideration because it is so peculiarly American. He was a native of Vermont, who was a baker and a wheelwright before he graduated at a small college at the age of twenty-six. Then, like many another New Englander, he went South to teach. There he encountered a woman friend who was constantly quoting Shakespeare. In response to some naïve questions of his she advised him to read the dramatist. He did so, and found his vocation. His lectures were enthusiastically received both when delivered and when published, his edition of the plays was in great

demand, and he is to this day read with admiration by many people. His Wordsworthian studies and his editorial and theological labours need not be discussed, nor need we inquire into the value of his Shakespearian work to the scholar. The fact that a man with such a training should have had such a career is what really concerns us.

Besides Hudson, three other critics of the period demand a few words. The first, Henry Theodore Tuckerman (1813-71), a native of Boston, but later a resident of New York, is now almost forgotten, but was in his day quite popular as a pleasant sympathetic writer on literature and art. His *Italian Sketch-Book* (1835) continued the tradition of Irving; his *Thoughts on the Poets* and other books were at least helpful to the rank and file of readers. A more strenuous and important critic was the Shakespearian scholar Richard Grant White of New York (1821-85). For many years he was chief of the Revenue Marine Bureau, a post that gave him leisure for scholarly labours. These practically began with a scathing examination of the emendations of Collier's MS. Folio, which was reprinted in *Shakespeare's Scholar* (1854). From 1857 to 1865 he edited an edition of Shakespeare in twelve volumes, which, while in many respects antiquated, still retains value, and was, for its day, a very creditable piece of work. His later contributions to Shakespearian criticism and his philological studies may be passed over, since in the natural progress of scholarship they have been left behind. White's acumen was considerable, but it was almost equalled by his dogmatism and combativeness. Hence he was never popular, but he deserves far more respect than do most of his more urbane and much more commonplace



contemporaries. His humorous satire *The New Gospel of Peace according to St. Benjamin* has been mentioned; his novel *The Fate of Mansfield Humphreys* (1884), a contribution to international fiction, while too full of his hobbies, linguistic and other, contained a very amusing description of the antics of a make-believe American vulgarian at an English country house, and was in other ways an interesting, though uneven book.

The third of our writers is Edwin Percy Whipple (1819-86) of Massachusetts, who, before Lowell's advent, was generally regarded as America's leading critic, and is still somewhat read. When not more than fifteen he was obliged to leave school and become a clerk in a bank. For several years he was kept at this sort of work, but read widely and sharpened his mind in a debating club. When he was twenty-four an enthusiastic article on Macaulay attracted notice, and Whipple soon became a popular lecturer. He travelled throughout the country, and thus obtained a greater reputation than a critic of far higher endowments would be likely to secure to-day. His two volumes entitled *Essays and Reviews* (1843), while in some respects of slight value, nevertheless, as criticism then stood in America, fairly deserved their success. By 1860 he was able to devote himself entirely to literature, but he was too conscientious in the preparation of his lectures and essays to be overprolific, and nine volumes, two of them posthumous, contain his entire works. It is almost impossible to understand the extravagant praise he received, but we can recognize his earnestness, his insistence—perhaps his overinsistence—upon the moral element in literature, his enthusiasm for his favourite wri-

ters, such as Wordsworth, his wide reading, his not infrequent felicity of phrase, and his ability, somewhat rare at the time, to express his dislikes in a hearty fashion. We can understand also how his apt illustrations and his anecdotes about famous men delighted his audiences. On the other hand, many of his pages suggest that he drew upon his commonplace book oftener than upon his brains, that his knowledge was frequently defective and his judgment still more so, that his criticism was lacking in subtlety, and that his style was at times far from pleasing. His *Age of Elizabeth*, which is generally considered his best book, shows but slight appreciation of writers lying at all outside the beaten track. His deliverances on the subject of Wordsworth are sometimes positively amusing. Whipple is probably unique in including "Vaudracour and Julia" in a list of Wordsworth's "most beautiful and sublime poems." Yet on the whole he was a sane and fairly well qualified guide to the reading public of his day.

In the fields of economics, classical scholarship, theology, and metaphysics our period presents a few names that deserve remembrance, but a marked scarcity of books of such originality of thought and such grace of style as to render necessary a discussion or even a mention of them in a history of literature. In economics the most important name is probably that of Henry C. Carey (1793-1879) of Philadelphia, who, like his father, Matthew, and other Pennsylvanian economists, was an effective propagandist of protection after he had abjured free trade. He showed acuteness and originality in his criticisms of Ricardo and Malthus, but he can scarcely be said to have

gained a high position among economists. The highest rank among writers of this general class probably belongs to the German Francis Lieber (1800-72), who, after various imprisonments for his liberal views, came to America and held chairs in History, Economics, and Politics in the South Carolina College and in Columbia, New York. His best-known work, *Civil Liberty and Self-Government*, appeared in 1852, while he was still in South Carolina. In classical scholarship the names of Profs. Charles Anthon and Henry Drisler of Columbia, and of Prof. and President Cornelius C. Felton of Harvard, are still remembered; that of Gesner Harrison of the University of Virginia, who, through the instructions of the great English scholar George Long, to whose chair he succeeded, was one of the first Americans to profit from the labours of Bopp and other German philologists, is less known than it should be. Prof. Basil L. Gildersleeve of Johns Hopkins, and that other great Grecian, Prof. William Watson Goodwin of Harvard, began their work before the civil war and are fortunately continuing it into a new century.

Of the theologians enough has been already said in other chapters. The name of Dr. Horace Bushnell of Connecticut ought, however, to be mentioned even if we at once, as students of literature, turn to a man whom only a trained theologian and metaphysician can discuss at all, but whom lovers of an admirable English style may find it worth their while to examine. This is HENRY JAMES (1811-82), who was born in Albany, New York, but lived much in England and in Massachusetts. Mr. James's theology may or may not have been a sort of Ishmaelitish Swedenborgianism—his two sons, Henry James, the novel-

ist, and Prof. William James, the psychologist, inheritors of his style, are almost the only living men capable of analyzing his views—but readers who do not care to get beyond their depths in the philosopher's speculations may derive comfort from his amusing account of his own endeavours to pin down or pen up another philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson. They will scarcely fail, even if they read the elder James for entertainment rather than for instruction, to conclude that they have been in the presence of one of the most original and acute thinkers along theological and sociological lines that America has yet produced.

At the farthest possible remove from James's speculations, as well as from the spiritualistic writings of the celebrated social reformer Robert Dale Owen, stand the simple sketches of Western life published under the pen-name of "Mrs. Mary Clavers." This homely appellation but slightly concealed the identity of Mrs. Caroline Matilda Stansbury Kirkland (1801–64) of New York. She was the wife of a scholar who, in the thirties, took up his residence for a few years in Michigan. The free, wholesome life she saw and led made her resolve to attempt a book in the line of Miss Mitford's *Our Village*. The result was *A New Home; Who'll Follow?* (1839), one of the pleasantest bits of descriptive writing to be found in the American literature of the period. Mrs. Kirkland possessed keen eyes, a sense of humour, an alert, well-stored mind, and an agreeable style; hence the charm of her book has not departed, while its value as a picture of primitive pioneer life has increased. Her later books have merit but need not detain us, for Mrs. Kirkland, a



representative of Eastern culture, is much less important than "Mrs. Mary Clavers," a note-taking-and-printing "chield" of far more than average talents. Indeed, one might almost say that when "Mrs. Clavers" fails to please it is due to the fact that the sophisticated Mrs. Kirkland sometimes assumed the pen.

A more distinguished woman observer of curious phases of American life, the celebrated Fanny Kemble, does not strictly belong to us. In lieu of discussing her we may turn to a man who has been mentioned more than once already and might as logically have been dealt with in some former chapter. This is the versatile GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS (1824-92), a writer beloved by his contemporaries and fully worthy of being gratefully remembered by posterity. Curtis was born in Providence, got some of his schooling near Boston, and at the age of fifteen removed with his family to New York. After a year spent in business the young idealist went with an elder brother to Brook Farm, and thence to Concord—in both places drawing inspiration from contact with the soil and with books. In 1846 he went to Europe and the East, remaining abroad three or four years. One of the most charming of his later essays describes his meeting with the Brownings in Florence. His *Nile Notes of a Howadji* (1851) and *The Howadji in Syria* (1852) were lighter impressions of travel than Bayard Taylor's, and won a popularity which they have doubtless lost forever. Along with *Lotus Eating* (1852), letters from fashionable watering-places, they were probably a little too highly coloured and lacking in quiet charm and solid thought. But whatever his youthful effusiveness, Curtis had a

sincere love and knowledge of the best in art, literature, and life, and as Mr. Howells has pointed out to us, his New England idealism did not die down amid the alien environment of New York. He satirized the amusingly narrow and pretentious social life of the metropolis in his rather overdrawn and now jejune *Potiphar Papers* (1853), but he did much more to free his country and period from provincialism and moral cowardice by his services as the editor of *Putnam's Magazine* and as a bold antislavery lecturer. His connection with the magazine ultimately involved him in financial losses, which he bore honourably and bravely; his advocacy of the cause of freedom exposed him to the menaces of mobs which he treated with spirited scorn. It is not easy to name a finer combination of the scholar and the patriot than the graceful, polished speaker who, in 1856, addressed the students of Wesleyan University on "The Duty of the American Scholar to Politics and the Times," and three years later lectured on "The Present Aspect of the Slavery Question" at Plymouth Church, in Brooklyn. The reader of to-day who allows the exaggerations and the flowers of rhetoric that are to be found in these speeches to prevent him from appreciating their essential nobility is as unjust to himself as to Curtis.

But Curtis was not merely to the close of his life a public speaker of almost unrivalled dignity and urbanity, he was also the most charming light essayist of his time in America. He began, in 1853, to write short papers for the "Editor's Easy Chair" in *Harper's Monthly*, and he continued to discharge this benevolent duty until his death. Whether the reader of to-morrow will enjoy the three

little volumes of these essays that have been collected as much as his grandfather and father did on their first appearance may be doubted; but as such essays are not abundant in American literature there is no reason for the reader of to-day to be supercilious with regard to them. There are, unfortunately, many reasons why readers may legitimately refuse so much as to glance at Curtis's single novel, *Trumps* (1861)—a story of New York life. A better word, though not so sympathetic a one as some persons would like, may be spoken for the anterior *Prue and I* (1856)—which was endeared to contemporary readers on account of its pleasant notes of sentimental domesticity and of pervasive ideality.

But the Curtis of the period covered by this chapter, while not an essentially different person from the Curtis of some twenty years later, is not the Curtis that most attracts some people. It is the untiring and unselfish civil-service reformer of the corrupt era of reconstruction and the prominent Independent or Mugwump of the Blaine-Cleveland campaign that is the inspiring Curtis whose fame some of us would not willingly let die. The services of the civil-service commissioner of 1871 and of the Republican "bolter" of 1884 belong to the history of politics rather than to that of literature, yet the orations and addresses of his later years are among his best writings and seem worthy not merely of preservation, but of perusal.

Curtis may perhaps be regarded as a transitional figure in the evolution of American oratory. We are here not so much concerned with what that oratory has become as with what it was during the years in which Curtis was

acquiring his own graces of style and delivery—nay, rather we are concerned with the literary value of the orations and speeches that have been handed down to us from what is usually termed “the Golden Age of American Oratory.” The triumphs as speakers of Webster, Everett, Clay, S. S. Prentiss, Hayne, Yancey, Choate, Phillips, and their peers belong partly to the history of politics, partly to that of culture; they can be just as much and just as little analyzed by the literary critic as the triumphs of great actors can be. Hence it is possible for American critics with considerable impunity to rank Daniel Webster with Demosthenes and Cicero. We are dependent upon the reports of hearers, and have an almost endless task before us when we endeavour to decide which particular set of hearers was best qualified to describe the impression made by the orator. Again, it has long been possible to criticise technically the different forms of oratory according to the purposes of persuasion and argumentation served by them, and if such critics pronounce Webster’s “Reply to Hayne” the greatest oration ever delivered, that is their own affair. So, too, if students of rhetoric pronounce Webster’s forensic style superior to Cicero’s, they are at perfect liberty to make the most of their discovery. If, however, the attempt is made to rank Webster’s speeches with those of Demosthenes and Cicero as literature, or to discuss Webster or any other orator and publicist as a man of letters, different critical standards must be employed, and the critic of literature has a right to be heard.

From the point of view of literature it may be questioned whether Americans have not overrated the works



of their orators and publicists. The writings of the Revolutionary fathers were, as we have already seen, well worth preserving as materials for the study of history, as sources of patriotic inspiration, as interesting human documents, but they were not literature in the æsthetic connotation of that term. The writings of Garrison, Greeley, Thomas H. Benton, Seward, Alexander H. Stephens, and Jefferson Davis are valuable, and in some cases attain the dignity of history, but they are either not literature or else barely come within the application of the term. The speeches and the treatises on government of the great expounder of strict constructionist views of the Constitution, John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, are marvellous through their rigorous logic, but appeal almost entirely to the intellect. Another South Carolinian, Hugh S. Legaré, showed in his critical writings that he might in a different environment have achieved a name for himself in literature; but instead he made himself a thorough student of the Roman law and a statesman whose brilliant career was unfortunately cut short. Charles Sumner won fame as well as blows by his speeches, and was endowed with the spirit and the knowledge of a true scholar, but the fifteen volumes of his writings are seldom disturbed save by students of history. So it is with many another worthy name. We read about these publicists and orators and statesmen with great interest, but, although we may consult and study, we surely do not read their collected writings.

Nor is the case so very different with the most famous of the orators who, between 1820 and 1850, charmed their fellow-countrymen whether from the political or the lec-

ture platform, or in the court-room, or in the Senate chamber. The massive volumes in which the classic eloquence of EDWARD EVERETT (1794-1865) is stored rest unopened. Yet if Everett's academic eloquence is a tradition only it should not be forgotten that he was a remarkable man, who did much to educate a young nation. After some preaching he was chosen Professor of Greek Literature at Harvard at the age of twenty, and a year later went to Europe to study, preceding Ticknor at Göttingen. Returning, he filled his chair and edited *The North American Review*. Not long after he was sent to Congress; then he was Governor of Massachusetts, then minister to England, then president of Harvard, then Secretary of State, then United States Senator, and finally, in 1860, a candidate for the vice-presidency. His lectures for charitable purposes netted immense sums; his oration on Washington was a "social and intellectual event of the first magnitude" wherever it was delivered. Everett wrote a prodigious number of review articles, and spoke with dignity and ease on an indefinite number of topics. He seemed never unprepared to roll off mellifluous and sonorous sentences appropriate to the occasion, and garnished with apt quotations from the best authors, ancient and modern. Yet even in his lifetime there were unimpeachable critics who declared that he gave them no fresh ideas, and there were zealous antislavery men who objurgated his conservatism. Posterity, without altogether admitting it, sides with his hostile critics by failing to read him. Instead of being a living force he is a stately figure in full dress slowly receding from our gaze.

Such is far from being the fate of DANIEL WEBSTER

(1782-1852), who almost ever since as a New Hampshire boy he astonished the neighbouring farmers by his recitation of poetry has been an idol of many of his countrymen. At eighteen he was selected to deliver a Fourth of July oration; before he was thirty he was a leader of the State bar. In his thirty-first year, during the War of 1812, he began his national career as a member of Congress, distinguishing himself with his future senatorial rivals, Clay and Calhoun. In 1817 he retired from politics, and by winning the famous case for his *alma mater*, Dartmouth College, showed himself to be without a superior as an advocate and almost unrivalled as an interpreter of the Constitution. Probably fewer people would weep to-day at the peroration of his masterly speech, but now, as then, men would feel that a consummately clear reasoner and expounder stood before them. In 1820 he delivered the first of his celebrated commemorative orations—that marking the two hundredth anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims. The range of ideas and the grasp of history displayed were unusual for the times, and this and similar subsequent orations, such as those on the laying the corner-stone of the Bunker Hill Monument and on the deaths of Adams and Jefferson, not only fascinated but helped to educate all who heard them. They are still pronounced by admirers to be unsurpassed in splendour, but this is a question of taste. There will always be people who will prefer to read Burke or Bossuet. Whether most of us would not prefer to have heard Webster's voice and seen "that amorphous crag-like face; the dull black eyes under the precipice of brows, like dull anthracite furnaces needing only to be *blown*; the mastiff mouth, accu-

rately closed " that made Carlyle trace in him " so much of *silent Berserkir rage*," is quite another matter.

Meanwhile, having since 1816 been a citizen of Boston, Webster was again, in 1822, sent to the lower house of Congress, where, among other notable speeches, he delivered one in favour of the revolting Greeks that was widely praised. His attitude in the debate was typical of the proud, expansive patriotism of the epoch; like that of the country, it was, to use his own words, "solemn and impressive." "Ours," he exclaimed, "is now the great republic of the earth." This was rather in the vein of Henry Clay, who, as a party leader and orator casting the glamour of his personality and glowing, fluent speech around a cause good or bad, was probably Webster's superior. Clay, although scarcely second in influence to any man of his time and Lincoln's "beau ideal of a statesman," is not now read with great pleasure. Fortunately Webster was reserved for higher things than this advocacy of interference in European affairs, which the sarcastic John Randolph ridiculed delightfully. In 1827 he was elected to the Senate, where he soon ranged himself with Clay and the protectionists. Three years afterward he rendered his greatest service to his country in his "Reply to Hayne." This admirable speech, whatever may be its precise value as literature or as an historical account of the formation of the Constitution, was of incalculable importance in focussing the loyalty of the North and West to the Union and in presenting an ideal of the Constitution as a help, not a hinderance, to national development. From this time forth the hopes of the friends of a free Union centred in Webster. He was not

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merely the most consummate forensic orator America had ever known; he was the guardian and interpreter of the Constitution and the defender of conservative freedom as opposed to the fanaticism of the abolitionists and of the advocates of slavery. His popularity, especially with the members of his own Whig party in New England and the Middle States, became almost unbounded. The homage that was paid him and the liberties that were allowed him might be cited by a pessimist as a proof that humanity is naturally servile.

There is no need to continue to describe a career that belongs primarily to the historian of politics. His debate with Calhoun, his opposition to Benton and Jackson in the matter of the bank and the removal of the deposits, his prosecution of the murderers of Captain White, his services as Secretary of State under Tyler, his candidacy for the presidency, his support of Clay's Compromise of 1850, are familiar to most Americans. The famous "Seventh of March Speech" which so helped Clay and the Compromisers, but gave mortal offence to numbers of Webster's antislavery friends, is now looked upon with considerable leniency. Webster is seen to have been honest and consistent with himself; for the Union had always meant much more to him than the antislavery cause, and he believed that the Compromise was necessary for the preservation of the Union. It may be questioned, however, whether there is not a tendency to overemphasize Webster's services as a statesman and an orator simply because a people who have preserved their union through a war naturally rank devotion to it as a cardinal virtue. Yet devotion to human liberty and to truth is a nobler

virtue, and clear-sightedness is a requisite of the highest statesmanship and of the most truly and permanently effective oratory.

But what of Webster's position in literature? If his style is all that has been claimed, if his orations are the equals of those of Burke and Cicero, he is a great man of letters who should be read more widely than he is. If he is Burke's equal, he is a fountain head of political philosophy. Is he not rather a fountain head of American patriotism—a very different thing? As an advocate, a forensic debater, an anniversary orator, it is hard to see how he can be surpassed, but it does not follow that the "Defence of the Kennistons" and the "Reply to Hayne" are great literature. Those of us who question the more than occasional splendour of Webster's imagination, who discover no plummet-like or soaring quality of intelligence, who demand more vivacity and humour than perhaps consorted with his dignity, who are not dazzled by his philosophy or his grasp of history, who would like more colour in his style, will not be able to rank him as a great writer. Those of us who, minimizing or ignoring these demands, lay emphasis upon Webster's power to stimulate patriotism, upon his sonorous dignity and massiveness as well as his clearness and strength of style, upon his powers of dramatic description, as illustrated in his prosecution of the murderers of Captain White, upon his pathos and general power to touch the emotions of the average man, upon his fine comprehension of the spirit of true democracy, will, perhaps, think that the question whether his orations are great literature is an impertinent one. Yet it is idle to expect that the world will admit Webster to the place

claimed for him by his admirers until this question is faced and so answered affirmatively that no room is left for cavil. The just promised edition of Webster may help matters, although it may be suspected that many of the requisite foot-notes will silently convict him of having been more provincial than world authors usually are. Yet after all, Webster is not responsible for the claims of his partisans, and fame and achievement such as his should command ungrudging though not unlimited admiration.

The mental and moral corpulency that some may discover in Webster furnished a very different, but in his way scarcely less gifted, orator with frequent opportunities to display his incisive genius. Wendell Phillips (1811-84) of Boston is probably in his turn becoming a tradition, and his witty, keen, passionate appeals for every form of freedom have far less claim to be considered literature than Webster's more weighty and sustained efforts. Yet from the day, in 1837, when this young patriot first stood up in Faneuil Hall to denounce the murderers of Lovejoy and the Bostonian defenders of the deed to that in 1881 when, as Phi Beta Kappa orator at Harvard, he denounced the lack of moral courage so often and so lamentably shown by educated men, there was no more bold, brilliant, or essentially noble speaker in America than Wendell Phillips. That he was a fanatic, that to have followed his advice in many or any particulars would have ruined the country, that he was frequently unjust to his opponents, may be freely admitted. What crusader is not unbalanced, and when will moral crusaders of Phillips's eloquence and honesty be superabundant? What matter if he did rank Toussaint L'Ouverture a little above

George Washington? We are not called upon to judge him as a critic or a thinker—although, in spite of his superficiality, he often thought a little too logically for the comfort of his opponents—we are called upon to admire him as a force in a nation's life.

A still greater force made itself visible in that life at the very close of our period—a conservative, not a radical force, one proceeding from the new, democratic West, not from old aristocratic Boston. Abraham Lincoln is in his own person almost as much a justification of the claim that there is a truly American literature as of the essential vitality of American democracy. Not that he was a man of letters. If he were still alive, he would probably put an end with some racy story to the attempts to write monographs upon his style and to give him a high place among American authors. Lincoln justifies the claim that there is a truly American literature, because it seems impossible that the country that could produce such an original product in the shape of a man should have been completely sterile in the matter of original creation in letters. As we have seen, the most distinctive note of American literature is its applicability to the needs of a healthy-minded, sound-hearted people. Franklin in one field, Cooper in another, Longfellow and Whittier in yet another, in spite of their indebtedness to British and Continental culture, were genuine American products and appealed to their readers because what they wrote was applicable to American conditions. Lincoln rose to the presidency because in the field of politics he comprehended the demands of those plain people who at least knew Longfellow's "Village Blacksmith" and the "Psalm of Life."



Lincoln's letters, his speeches against Douglas, his admirably clear and brave address at the Cooper Union in 1860, and his state papers, reveal how thoroughly he was a part of that people which had determined the democratic, utilitarian trend of the national literature. But while a part of this people, Lincoln was an exceptionally thoughtful part, and the more one studies his career, the more one inclines to the belief that his accession to the presidency was scarcely more accidental than Franklin's rise to eminence among his colonial countrymen or Longfellow's subsequent conquest of the national heart. Simplicity and wholesomeness of democratic appeal mark the words and deeds of Lincoln and the books of the popular authors contemporary with him. But both Lincoln and those authors could draw inspiration not only from American life, but from English culture. Lincoln drew from his reading of the Bible and Shakespeare, and from the depths of his originally noble and variedly trained nature, that sublimely simple eloquence that makes the short address at Gettysburg and passages from the two inaugurals not merely classic utterances securely fixed in the memory of the race, but flawless expressions of his own great soul. His name closes an important era of American history which it is just becoming possible to treat dispassionately; it is a fitting and auspicious name with which to close an account of the development of American literature.



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(B) Anthologies.—E. A. and G. L. Duyckinck, *Cyclopædia of American Literature* (2 vols., 1855; 3d enlarged ed., 1875); E. C. Stedman and E. M. Hutchinson, *Library of American Literature* (11 vols., 1888–90, full and excellent).

(C) Bibliographies.—J. Sabin, *Bibliotheca Americana* (20 vols., 1867–92, unfinished); P. K. Foley, *American Authors, 1795–1895* (1897); S. L. Whitcomb, *Chronological Outlines of American Literature* (1894).

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(B) Anthologies.—S. Kettell, *Specimens of American Poetry* (3 vols., 1829); R. W. Griswold, *The Poets and Poetry of America* (1842; numerous subsequent editions), *Prose Writers of America* (1847), *Female Poets of America* (1848); A. B. Hart, *American History told by Contemporaries* (4 vols., 1897–1901); G. R. Carpenter, *American Prose* (1898); E. C. Stedman, *An American Anthology* (1900); Louise Manly, *Southern Literature* (revised ed., 1900); W. P. Trent and B. W. Wells, *Colonial Prose and Poetry* (3 vols., 1901); *Old South Leaflets* (various dates). See p. 348.

(C) Bibliographies.—E. Channing and A. B. Hart, *Guide to American History* (1896); O. Wegelin, *Early American Plays, 1714–1830* (1900), *Early American Fiction, 1774–1830* (1902).

## PART I—1607–1764

CHAPTERS I AND II.—Early colonial verse is, in the main, to be found in the anthologies, in such prose repositories as Mather's *Magnalia*, and in publications like those of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and of the group of bibliophiles known as "The Club of Odd Volumes." For example, Folger's *Looking-Glass* will be found in the revised Duyckinck; Thomson's *New England's Crisis* and Oakes's *Elegy on Thomas Shepard*, among the issues of the "Odd Volumes." *The Bay Psalm Book* was reprinted in 1862. Mrs. Bradstreet's complete works were edited by J. H. Ellis in 1867, and privately printed for "The Duodecimos" in 1897, with an introduction by C. E. Norton. For Wigglesworth, see the *Memoir* by J. W. Dean (2d ed., 1871). The latest edition of *The Day of Doom* is that of 1867. For Samuel Wigglesworth's elegy on Clarke, see *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, iv, 89–90.

CHAPTER III.—For full details as to the writings of the annalists, see Channing and Hart's *Guide*. Most of the texts mentioned may be found either in separate reprints, or in the papers of historical societies, or in such collections as Force's *Tracts*. The best edition of Captain John Smith's works is that of Edward Arber (1884). An accurate edition of Bradford's *History of Plymouth* was issued in 1898 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. For Bradford's other writings, see Young's *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers* (1841). *Mourt's Relation* was edited by H. M. Dexter in 1865. Winthrop's *History of New England*, the manuscript of which, like Bradford's, had curious adventures, may be best read in the edition by James Savage (2 vols., 1853). See also R. C. Winthrop's *Life and Letters of John Winthrop* (2 vols., 1864). The best edition of Johnson's *Wonder-Working Providence* is that by William F. Poole (1867).



The special student will find it necessary to consider many writers not named in the text, e. g., Thomas Morton of Merry Mount, the foe of the Pilgrims, whose *New English Canaan* (1637), edited by Charles Francis Adams (1883), is one of the most entertaining of colonial books; Rev. Francis Higginson is also an interesting writer, and so is the over-credulous John Josselyn.

CHAPTER IV.—For Thomas Hooker, see the biography by G. L. Walker (1891). Thomas Shepard's writings were edited by J. A. Albro (3 vols., 1853). For Cotton, see Williston Walker, *Ten New England Leaders* (1901). For Roger Williams, see the biography by Oscar S. Straus (1894); Williams's chief works, including his correspondence, will be found in *Narragansett Club Publications* (6 vols.). For Ward, see the *Memoir* by J. W. Dean (1868); the *Simple Cobbler* was edited by D. Pulsifer (1843). For John Eliot, see Walker, *loc. cit.* For the Mathers, see Wendell's *Life of Cotton Mather, the Puritan Priest* (1891), and A. P. Marvin's *Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (1892). S. G. Drake edited I. Mather's *History of King Philip's War* in 1862, and his *Early History of New England* in 1864. His *Remarkable Providences* appeared in "The Library of Old Authors" (1856). The same collection contains C. Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1862). The *Magnalia* was reprinted in 1820 and in 1853.

The special student will do well to examine the writings of the following divines: Peter Bulkley; Charles Chauncy, educator and scholar; John Davenport; Edward Holyoke, interesting from the point of view of style; William Hooke, a cousin of Oliver Cromwell, interesting for the same reason; John Norton, the biographer of Cotton; Urian Oakes, better known as a poet; Samuel Stone; and Thomas Welde, collaborator in the *Bay Psalm Book* and historian of the Hutchinsonian controversy.

CHAPTER V.—Most of the verse of the period must be studied in the anthologies, unless one has access to a large library. Roger Wolcott's verses have been reprinted by "The Club of Odd Volumes." Seccomb's doggerel was edited by J. L. Sibley in 1854. For Colman and Mrs. Turell, see E. Turell's *The Life and Character of the Reverend Benjamin Colman, D. D.* (1749), one of the most interesting of colonial books. *The Essays, Humor, and Poems* of Nathaniel Ames (and of his son and namesake) were edited by S. Briggs in 1891.

The student may find it worth while to examine Ralph's most important poems, *The Tempest* (1727) and *Zeuma, or the Love of Liberty* (1729), a Peruvian epic. Another verse-writer worth a glance is the Rev. John Adams (1705-40), a linguist and poet of great eminence in the eyes of his New England contemporaries, whose *Poems on Several Occasions*

(1745) at least showed culture. A specially rare and curious performance is the drama *Ponteach, or the Savages of America* (1765) by the noted ranger, Major Robert Rogers. See Duyckinck, Parkman's *Conspiracy of Pontiac*, and Tyler's *Literary History of the American Revolution*, ii, 188-192. The poems of Ebenezer Cook may be found in *Early Maryland Poetry*, edited by B. C. Steiner (1900).

CHAPTER VI.—For Prince's *Chronological History*, see Arber's *English Garner*, vol. ii, 1874; for Sewall's Diary, vols. v-viii, fifth series of the Massachusetts Historical Society Collections. Mrs. Knight's *Journal*, first edited, in 1825, by Theodore Dwight, has been reprinted at least twice. The best edition of Colonel Byrd's writings is that by John S. Bassett (1901); Byrd's correspondence may be found in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (1901-02); and there are reprints of Beverley, Hugh Jones, and Stith. John Wise's two tracts were reprinted in 1772 and 1860—a striking testimony to their value as pleas for political liberty. There have been at least five editions of Edwards's works (none complete)—two in England and three in America. The latest is that of 1852 (4 vols.). For Edwards's life, see the excellent biography by Rev. A. V. G. Allen (1889); for criticism, see essays by Holmes (*Works*, vol. viii) and Sir Leslie Stephen (*Hours in a Library*, 2d series), also *Jonathan Edwards, a Retrospect*, edited by H. N. Gardiner (1901). Franklin's works were edited by Sparks (10 vols., 1836-50), but the best edition is that of John Bigelow (10 vols., 1887-88), who is also the editor of the best edition of the *Autobiography* (3 vols., 1875). See the biography by J. B. McMaster in the "American Men of Letters" (1887), and P. L. Ford's *Franklin Bibliography* (1889).

The student will bear in mind among other names those of the Rev. John Callender, historian of Rhode Island; of the Rev. John Williams, author of *The Redeemed Captive* (1707), one of the most popular of the accounts of Indian atrocities; of Thomas Church, whose *Entertaining Passages relating to Philip's War* (1716) was based on the notes of his father, Colonel Benjamin Church; of a similar chronicler, Samuel Penhallow; of Cadwallader Colden, author of *The History of the Five Indian Nations* (1747; reprinted 1902); and of William Smith, author of a *History of New York* (1757); as well as of such distinguished clergymen as John Higginson and William Stoughton.

## PART II—1765-1788

CHAPTER VII.—For Otis, see the biography (1823) by William Tudor (1779-1830), a Boston man of letters, who helped to found *The Monthly*

*Anthology*, and was the projector and first editor of *The North American Review*. There is also a life of Otis by Francis Bowen (1847). For Mayhew, see the biography by A. Bradford (1838); Mayhew's *Discourse concerning Unlimited Submission* is reprinted in Thornton's *Pulpit of the American Revolution* (1860). For the clerical publicists generally, see also *The Patriot Preachers of the American Revolution* (1860) and W. B. Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit* (9 vols., 1859-69). Besides the American editions of 1800-01 and of 1802, there are two Edinburgh editions of Witherspoon's works (1804-05 and 1815, 9 vols.). For Seabury, see his *Life and Correspondence*, edited by E. E. Beardsley (2d ed., 1881). For Dickinson, see his life by C. J. Stillé (1891), and his *Political Writings* edited by P. L. Ford (1895).

The best life of Paine is that by M. D. Conway (2 vols., 1892), who has also edited Paine's works (4 vols., 1894-96). The best edition of Jefferson is that by P. L. Ford (10 vols., 1892-99). A good edition of *The Federalist* is also due to Ford (1898), but see for the assignment of essays to Hamilton and Madison, E. G. Bourne's *Essays in Historical Criticism* (1901).

CHAPTER VIII.—For the patriot and loyalist verse of the period, see *The Loyalist Poetry of the Revolution* (1857) and *The Loyal Verses of Stansbury and Odell* (1860), both edited by Winthrop Sargent; also Frank Moore, *Songs and Ballads of the American Revolution* (1856). Duyckinck, i, is also useful. Hopkinson's *Pretty Story* was edited by B. J. Lossing (1857). Freneau's poems of 1786 were issued in the "Library of Old Authors" in 1861; his Revolutionary poems were edited by E. A. Duyckinck in 1865. It is very difficult to obtain the early editions of his verse and prose, but a complete edition is promised under the editorship of Prof. F. L. Pattee (1903). For Freneau's life, see the biography by Mary F. Austin (1901) and Dr. Samuel E. Forman's monograph, *The Political Activities of Philip Freneau* in the Johns Hopkins University Studies (Series xx, Nos. 9-10, 1902). For Barlow, see his *Life and Letters*, edited by Charles Burr Todd (1886). For both Barlow and Dwight, see M. C. Tyler's *Three Men of Letters* (1895). Trumbull's *Poetical Works* were collected in 1820 (2 vols.). B. J. Lossing edited *McFingal* in 1860. The *Miscellaneous Works* of Colonel Humphreys appeared in 1790; his life of Israel Putnam in 1818. *The Anarchiad* was not published in book form until 1861. The last edition of Phillis Wheatley's verses appeared in 1834, with a memoir; her letters were printed in 1864. Woolman's *Journal and Other Writings* may be obtained in one volume (1883); his *Journal* was published in 1872, with an introduction by Whittier, and in "Macmillan's English Classics" (1903). Crevecoeur



and Hutchinson have long been out of print; for the latter, see J. F. Jameson, *loc. cit.* Peters's *General History of Connecticut* was edited by S. J. McCormick in 1877. See also J. H. Trumbull's *True-Blue Laws*, etc. (1876). Peters's *A History of Hugh Peters, A. M.* (1807) is a not uninteresting if unreliable performance.

The student will add to the names treated in the text those of the travelers and explorers James Adair and William Stork, and of the historian Rev. William Gordon, whose *History of the American Revolution* (4 vols., 1788) is no longer, however, considered worthy of high praise. Other historians are Dr. David Ramsay of South Carolina, and the cultured Rev. Jeremy Belknap, the historian of New Hampshire. The latter's history (3 vols., 1784-92) is regarded as one of the best of those devoted to the individual colonies. See the biography edited by his daughter (1847) for specimens of his humorous political apologue *The Foresters* (1796). Other historians of interest are the ecclesiastical chroniclers, especially such as Morgan Edwards and Isaac Backus of the Baptists. A versifier of some interest is Dr. Joseph Brown Ladd (1764-86) of Rhode Island, author of the *Poems of Arouet* (1786)—a lover whose passion was more poetical than his verses and whose fate was more pathetic.

### PART III—1789-1829

CHAPTER IX.—Carey's *Autobiography* appeared in the *New England Magazine* (1833-34). For Fessenden, see Hawthorne's Works, vol. xii. For Mrs. Rowson, see the biography by Elias Nason (1870). Mrs. Adams's letters were first collected in 1848; they were supplemented in 1876. Mrs. Morton's *The Power of Sympathy*, perhaps the earliest real novel written by an American, appeared in 1789 (2 vols.). It was reprinted in 1894. For a good bibliography of early fiction, see Wegelin, *loc. cit.* For the early drama, see the same writer; also Dunlap and G. A. Seilhamer, *History of the American Theater, 1749-1797* (3 vols., 1888-91). Tyler's *Contrast*, edited by T. J. McKee, was the first number of the *Dunlap Society Publications* (1887). For Dunlap, see these *Publications*; also F. H. Wilkins, *Early Influence of German Literature in America* (*Americana Germanica*, iii, 2). The latest editions of Brockden Brown's novels are those of 1857 and 1887 (Philadelphia), both in 6 volumes. See Dunlap's biography (2 vols., 1815), which contains Brown's miscellaneous fiction, and the sketch by Prescott in his *Miscellanies* (1845; also in Sparks's *American Biography*, i). For Dennie, see the monograph by W. W. Clapp (1880). Fisher Ames's works, with a memoir, were published in 1809; an enlarged edition in 2 vols. appeared in 1854; supple-



mentary speeches were issued in 1871. For John Randolph, see biographies by Garland (2 vols., 1850) and by Henry Adams (1882), as well as Randolph's *Letters to a Young Relative* (1834). For Noah Webster, see the biography by H. E. Scudder ("American Men of Letters," 1882). For Wirt, see the *Memoirs* by J. P. Kennedy (2 vols., 1849).

The special student will find in Kettell the names of numerous versifiers whom he may investigate at leisure. Here only the following need be mentioned as worthy of some attention: St. John Honeywood, whose posthumous poems (1801) show mild facetiousness and satiric power; Mrs. Elizabeth Ferguson; Mrs. Ann Eliza Bleecker and her daughter, Mrs. M. V. Faugeres; Rev. John Blair Linn, of whom his brother-in-law, Brockden Brown, wrote a short memoir; and Edward Church, like his brother Benjamin, a satirist. Mrs. Bleecker also wrote some tales, and thus belongs to the group of women novelists headed by Mrs. Rowson. To these should be added two once popular writers—Mrs. Tabitha Tenney, author of *Female Quixotism* (1808)—a book which suggests an expurgated Smollett—and Mrs. Caroline Warren, author of *The Gamesters* (1805), which suggests Richardson modified by Hannah More. A masculine writer of amusingly exemplary fiction was the Rev. Enos Hitchcock, D. D., who raises unintended smiles. A woman writer, with a pathetic career described in her simple *Autobiography* (1832), is Miss Hannah Adams, of Massachusetts, historian of New England and the Jews. Mrs. Anne Grant's *Memoirs of an American Lady* [Madame Schuyler, 1808] scarcely belongs to American literature.

CHAPTER X.—There are various editions of Irving's complete works. See his *Life and Letters*, by P. M. Irving (4 vols., 1862-64), and the life by C. D. Warner ("American Men of Letters," 1881). The *Literary Life of James K. Paulding* was published by his son in 1867; this was followed by his *Select Works* (4 vols., 1867-68). There are numerous editions of Cooper's novels, and especially of his *Leatherstocking* and *Sea Tales*. His miscellaneous works have been long out of print. See life by T. R. Lounsbury ("American Men of Letters," 1883). Woodworth's poems, with a memoir by G. P. Morris, were published in 1861 (2 vols.). The last edition of Morris's collected verses appeared in 1860. From Neal's works the following may be selected as representative: *The Battle of Niagara* (1818), verse; *Seventy-six* (1822), *Randolph* (1823); and *Rachel Dyer* (1828), fiction. See also his *Wandering Recollections*, etc. (1869). For Miss Sedgwick, see her *Life and Letters*, edited by Mary E. Dewey (1871); of her numerous stories, *A New England Tale*, etc. (1822, 1860), *Redwood* (1824), *Clarence* (1830), *The Linwoods* (1835), and *Marrried or Single* (1857) are sufficiently representative. For Mrs. Child, see

her *Letters* (1882) and an excellent essay in Higginson's *Contemporaries* (1899). Austin's "Peter Rugg" may be read in the *Boston Book* for 1841 and in Stedman-Hutchinson (abridged). Austin's writings were republished in 1890.

CHAPTER XI.—For Goodrich, see his *Recollections* (2 vols., 1857). For Bryant, see the biography by his son-in-law, Parke Godwin (2 vols., 1883). Godwin also edited Bryant's works—the Poems (2 vols., 1883); the Prose (2 vols., 1884). See also J. Bigelow's *Bryant* ("American Men of Letters," 1890) and J. G. Wilson's *Bryant and His Friends* (1886). For Payne, see *John Howard Payne*, by Gabriel Harrison (1885). For Drake and Halleck, see J. G. Wilson's *Life and Letters* of the latter (1869), also Wilson's edition of the *Poetical Writings* of Halleck (1869). A memoir of Sands is given in his works edited by Gulian C. Verplanck (2 vols., 1834). The elder Dana's works were published in two volumes, in 1850; for the younger Dana, see the biography by Charles Francis Adams (2 vols., 1890). For Allston, see his *Life and Letters* (1892) edited by J. B. Flagg. The latest edition of Sprague's verse and prose is that of 1876. Mrs. Brooks's *Zophiel* was edited, with a memoir, by Z. B. Gustafson (1879). Her curious autobiographical romance, *Idomen*, appeared in 1843. For Mrs. Sigourney, see her *Letters of Life* (1866). Percival's *Life and Letters* were edited in 1866 by Julius H. Ward.

It is unnecessary to give information with regard to the miscellaneous writers mentioned at the close of the chapter, but to them may be added the names of Robert Walsh (1784–1859), editor of the *American Quarterly Review* and other journals and a critic and publicist of contemporary prominence, and of Prof. Edward T. Channing of Harvard (1790–1856), a promoter, early editor, and influential reviewer of *The North American Review*. Nor should Isaiah Thomas's *History of Printing in America* (1810) be overlooked. The verse-writers may be supplemented by the names of Henry Pickering, son of the distinguished statesman and a true, if small poet; Carlos Wilcox, a Connecticut clergyman who reminded his admirers, with some justice, of Cowper; William Leggett, friend and coadjutor of Bryant; Hannah F. Gould, whose "Name in the Sand" is still quoted; Isaac Clason, who added two cantos to *Don Juan*; William Crafts, a literary man of Charleston; Richard Dabney of Virginia, a forerunner of Poe; William Munford of the same State, author of a meritorious translation of the *Iliad*; and Dr. John Shaw of Maryland, whose posthumous verses were better than those usually collected by the friends of early lost poets.

## PART IV—1830–1865

CHAPTER XII.—The literature of Unitarianism and of transcendentalism is too voluminous to be treated fully. Many of the biographies subsequently to be named give sketches of the two movements. The reader may be specially referred to Williston Walker's *Ten New England Leaders* (1901) and *History of the Congregational Churches in the United States* (1894); to the Rev. A. P. Peabody's chapter, "The Unitarians in Boston," in Winsor's *Memorial History of Boston* (vol. iii, 1880–81); to George E. Ellis's *Half Century of the Unitarian Controversy* (1857); to George Willis Cooke's *Unitarianism in America* (1902); to James Freeman Clarke's *Autobiography*, etc., edited by E. E. Hale (1891); to O. B. Frothingham's *Transcendentalism in New England* (1876), and his life of George Ripley ("American Men of Letters," 1882); to Lindsay Swift's *Brook Farm* (1900); and to T. W. Higginson's *Old Cambridge* (1900). For the Buckminsters, see Eliza B. Lee's *Memoirs*, etc. (1851), and S. C. Thatcher's introduction to J. S. Buckminster's *Sermons* (1814). The works of the younger Buckminster appeared in 1839 (2 vols.). W. E. Channing's works were collected in 1841 (5 vols.). Two more volumes were added, and his complete works may be obtained in one volume (1886). See his life by W. H. Channing (3 vols., 1848; 1 vol., 1880). See also Renan's essay in his *Études d'histoire religieuse* (1864), and the biography by J. W. Chadwick (1903). For Alcott, see the *Memoir* by F. B. Sanborn and W. T. Harris (2 vols., 1893). Theodore Parker's collected works were published in London in 14 vols. (1863–65). See also his *Life and Correspondence*, edited by John Weiss (2 vols., 1864), and biographies by O. B. Frothingham (1874) and J. W. Chadwick (1900).

CHAPTER XIII.—For Margaret Fuller, see her life by Emerson, Clarke, and W. H. Channing (3 vols., 1852), and that by T. W. Higginson ("American Men of Letters," 1884). *The Dial* has been reprinted by the Rowfant Club of Chicago (1902) with an account of the enterprise by George Willis Cooke. For Emerson, see the memoir by J. E. Cabot (2 vols., 1887), also the biographies by Holmes ("American Men of Letters," 1884) and Richard Garnett ("Great Writers," 1888). The Carlyle-Emerson correspondence was edited by C. E. Norton (2 vols., 1883). The standard edition of Emerson's works is the Riverside, in 12 vols. For criticism, see M. Arnold, *Discourses in America*; Lowell, *Works*, vol. i; J. J. Chapman, *Emerson and Other Essays* (1898). For Thoreau, see his Letters in the Riverside edition of his works (11 vols.), also the biographies by W. E. Channing, 2d (1873, 1902), by A. H. Japp (1877), by F. B. Sanborn ("American Men of Letters," 1882), and by H. S. Salt ("Great



Writers," 1896). There is a memoir by Emerson (prefixed to *Miscellanies*) and a growing mass of criticism and special books, as well as an occasional contribution to Thoreau's works, e. g., his *Essay on Service*, edited by F. B. Sanborn (1902). Cf. Lowell, *Works*, vol. i; Stevenson, *Familiar Studies*. A complete edition of Jones Very's essays and verses, with a sketch by J. F. Clarke, was published in 1886. A selection of the verses of W. E. Channing, 2d, was edited by F. B. Sanborn in 1902.

CHAPTER XIV.—For Hawthorne's works, the Riverside edition in 12 vols. is the standard. For his life, see Julian Hawthorne's *Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Wife* (2 vols., 1885); also Henry James's biography in "English Men of Letters" (1879), Moncure Conway's in "Great Writers" (1890), and George E. Woodberry's in "American Men of Letters" (1902). See also G. P. Lathrop, *A Study of Hawthorne* (1876).

For Poe, the chief early editions are those of Griswold (3 vols., 1850; vol. iv, 1856), J. H. Ingram (4 vols., 1874-75), and R. H. Stoddard (6 vols., 1884). The chief modern editions are the Stedman-Woodberry (10 vols., 1894-95), with good critical apparatus; the Virginia edition (17 vols., 1902), edited by Prof. Jas. A. Harrison, much the fullest in matter and the most authentic in text; and the Arnheim, edited by Prof. C. F. Richardson (1902). Of the numerous biographies the most important are those by Griswold (1850), by W. F. Gill (1877; 3d ed., 1878), by J. H. Ingram (2 vols., 1880; new ed. in 1 vol., 1886), by G. E. Woodberry ("American Men of Letters," 1885), by the same in vol. i of the Stedman-Woodberry edition (1894), and by J. A. Harrison (Virginia edition, vol. i, 1902). The *Letters of R. W. Griswold* (1898) may also be consulted.

For Kennedy, see Tuckerman's biography (1871), the tenth volume in the uniform edition of Kennedy's works. For Simms, see Trent's biography in "American Men of Letters" (1892). Melville's *Typee*, *Omoo*, *Moby Dick*, and *White Jacket* were edited in 4 vols., with an introduction by Arthur Stedman, in 1892. His later volumes, such as *Piazza Tales* (1856), *Battle Pieces* (1866), and the curious poem *Clarel* (1876), slumber undisturbed. Cheap editions of the romances of Ware and Mayo are easily obtainable. Daniel P. Thompson's *Green Mountain Boys*, one of the better romances of this period, has also been reprinted, but Hoffman's *Greyslaer* and the romances of Bird must be read in old editions.

CHAPTER XV.—The standard Riverside edition of Longfellow's works, including his translations, is in 11 vols. Samuel Longfellow's *Life and Letters* (2 vols., 1886) and *Final Memorials* (1887) of his brother were gathered in a *Life* (3 vols., 1891). See also E. S. Robertson's life in "Great Writers" (1887), G. R. Carpenter's *Longfellow* ("Beacon Biographies," 1901), and T. W. Higginson's in "American Men of Letters"



(1902). The Riverside edition of Whittier is in 7 vols. The authorized biography is the *Life and Letters* by S. T. Pickard (2 vols., 1894). See also W. J. Linton's biography in "Great Writers" (1893) and T. W. Higginson's in "English Men of Letters" (1902). The Riverside edition of Holmes contains 13 vols. See also John T. Morse's *Life and Letters* (2 vols., 1896). The poems of these three writers, and of Lowell, may be had in the excellent single volume Cambridge editions.

CHAPTER XVI.—The Riverside edition of Lowell's works is in 11 vols. His *Letters* were edited by C. E. Norton in 1893 (2 vols.). See the elaborate biography by Horace E. Scudder (2 vols., 1901). See also E. E. Hale's *James Russell Lowell and his Friends* (1899) and W. D. Howells' *Literary Friends and Acquaintance* (1900). R. T. S. Lowell's *Poems* were collected in 1874. For Willis, see the life by H. A. Beers ("American Men of Letters," 1885), also the latter's selections from Willis's prose (1885). There are various editions of Willis's poems, the most complete being that of 1868. There is no complete edition of his prose, although 13 volumes were issued in uniform style (1849-59).

For the minor versifiers of the period Griswold, Duyckinck, Cheever, Stedman-Hutchinson, and Stedman in his *Anthology*, will furnish the general reader with abundant, if not overabundant, materials. The student will perhaps need to examine somewhat the work of the following writers not mentioned in the text: William W. Lord, Alfred B. Street, Amelia B. Welby, the chief verse-writer of her sex in the West, Cornelius Matthews, Henry B. Hirst, Dr. Thomas Dunn English, the author of "Ben Bolt" and antagonist of Poe, Grenville Mellen, George Lunt, George H. Calvert, Rufus Dawes, Willis Gaylord Clark, A. B. Meek, Mrs. S. J. Hale, Mrs. S. H. Whitman—but the list is too formidable. Park Benjamin, George D. Prentice, Albert Gorton Greene, and Mrs. Seba Smith, author of "The Sinless Child," are mentioned in other chapters. With regard to the minor poets referred to in the text, it may be remarked that Hoffman's complete poems were published in 1873; that the volumes of Pike, and especially of Chivers, are not easily obtained, the British Museum being said to be the uniquely happy possessor of a complete set of the latter's works; and that the poems of Dr. Parsons appeared in a definitive edition in 1893.

CHAPTER XVII.—Bayard Taylor's poems, dramas, translation of *Faust*, and his *Life and Letters*, edited by Marie Hansen Taylor and H. E. Scudder (2 vols., 1884), may be had in a uniform edition of 6 vols. For his travels, romances, etc., one must depend on older editions. See also the biography by A. H. Smyth ("American Men of Letters," 1896). Hayne's poems were collected in 1882; Timrod's in 1873 and 1899. For

Whitman, the editions of the *Leaves* and the *Complete Prose Works* (both 1898) have just been superseded by an elaborate edition (1902). The authorized life is that by Dr. R. M. Bucke (1883). See also the critical volumes by J. A. Symonds (1893), John Burroughs (1896), W. N. Guthrie (1897); the miscellaneous collection entitled *In re Walt Whitman* (1893); and essays by Stevenson, Dowden, J. J. Chapman, etc. Miss Warner's *Wide, Wide World* and Miss Cummins's *Lamplighter* circulate in cheap editions. The Riverside edition of Mrs. Stowe's works, including Mrs. Annie Fields' volume of her *Life and Letters* (1897), comprises 17 vols.

Mention should be made of the once much read poems of Lucy Larcom and of Alice and Phœbe Cary, also of W. A. Butler's *Nothing to Wear*. The sculptor W. W. Story's works may be had in 8 volumes, two of which contain his poems, the remainder his essays, e. g., *Roba di Roma* (1862), *Conversations in a Studio* (1890), etc. A volume of James T. Fields' verses is still in print; his most noteworthy book, *Yesterdays with Authors* (1872), has passed through many editions.

CHAPTER XVIII.—For specimens of early American humour, see the actor-editor W. E. Burton's *Cyclopædia of Wit and Humour* (2 vols., 1858). Haweis's *American Humorists* (1882) discusses those humorists whose fame crossed the Atlantic. For a discussion in some respects fuller than that given in this chapter, see Trent, "A Retrospect of American Humour," in *The Century* for November, 1901. Poole's Index will give clues to other articles. For biographical information, Appletons' *Cyclopædia of American Biography* is the most available source. For Judge Baldwin, see a careful article by G. F. Mellen in *The Sewanee Review* for April, 1901. Saxe's poems may be obtained in two convenient editions. Halpine's *Poetical Works*, exclusive of the mass of his "O'Reilly" effusions, were collected, with a memoir, by Robert B. Roosevelt (1869). Charles Farrar Browne's *Complete Works*, with a memoir by Melville D. Landon, better known as the humorist "Eli Perkins," appeared in 1875.

CHAPTER XIX.—For the historians, see Jameson, *loc. cit.* For Sparks, see his *Life and Writings*, by H. B. Adams (2 vols., 1893). The best edition of Prescott is that by John Foster Kirk (16 vols., 1870-74). See also the biography by Ticknor (1864). Motley's histories may be had in a uniform edition of 9 vols. See his *Letters*, edited by Curtis (2 vols., 1889), and the *Memoir* by O. W. Holmes (1879). There are several uniform editions of Parkman's histories. See the biography by C. H. Farnham (1900). For Ticknor, see his *Life, Letters*, etc. (2 vols., 1876). Many of Grant White's later books are still in print, as well as his two editions of Shakespeare. Whipple's works may be had in a uniform edition (9 vols.). The *Literary Remains* of Henry James were edited, with an

elaborate introduction, by Prof. Wm. James (1885). G. W. Curtis's early works were collected in 5 vols. in 1856. His *Orations and Addresses* were edited by C. E. Norton (3 vols., 1894). Four collections of his various essays and studies are dated 1892, 1893, 1894, and 1898. See also the biography by Edward Cary ("American Men of Letters," 1894) and *Letters to John S. Dwight* (1898).

Full details with regard to the numerous orators and publicists will not be looked for here. Webster's works were published in 6 vols. in 1851. There have been several volumes of his selected speeches, e. g., those edited by Whipple (1879) and by A. J. George (1893). An important collection of his letters appeared in 1902, and a new edition of his works is in progress. See the biographies by Geo. Ticknor Curtis (2 vols., 1870), by H. C. Lodge ("American Statesmen," 1883), and by J. B. McMaster (1902). For Everett, see his *Orations and Speeches on Various Occasions* (4 vols., 1853-68); also his *Life of Washington* (1860), originally contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* at the suggestion of Macaulay. The writings of Clay are found in his *Private Correspondence* (1855) and in 6 vols. of his works (1863), both edited by C. Colton. Calhoun's works are in 6 vols. (1853-85). His correspondence was edited for the American Historical Association by J. F. Jameson (1900). Wendell Phillips's speeches, lectures, and letters may be had in 2 vols. (1894). Legaré's writings, including his elaborate reviews, were published in 1846 (2 vols.). Sumner's works appeared in 15 vols. (1874-83). Lincoln's complete works were edited by Nicolay and Hay (2 vols., 1894). For the lives and works of Garrison, Benton, Jefferson Davis, Stephens, and other statesmen, as well as for important biographies of public men, such as Henry S. Randall's *Life of Thomas Jefferson* (3 vols., 1858) and William C. Rives's *History of the Life and Times of James Madison* (3 vols., 1859), see Channing and Hart's *Guide*.

Numerous worthy writers whom the special student will need to examine are of necessity not even mentioned in the text. Such are John Foster Kirk, historian of Charles the Bold, and Dr. John William Draper, author of the *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe* and the *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*. The historian of the Inquisition, Henry Charles Lea, really belongs to years not covered by this book. The able biographer James Parton, author of good lives of Jackson, Voltaire, and other worthies, should not be overlooked. Among the critics may perhaps be reckoned the ill-fated Miss Delia Bacon. To the theologians and metaphysicians mentioned should be added, at least, the names of Dr. Archibald Alexander, Dr. William Henry Furness, Dr. Mark Hopkins, and Dr. Francis Wayland.





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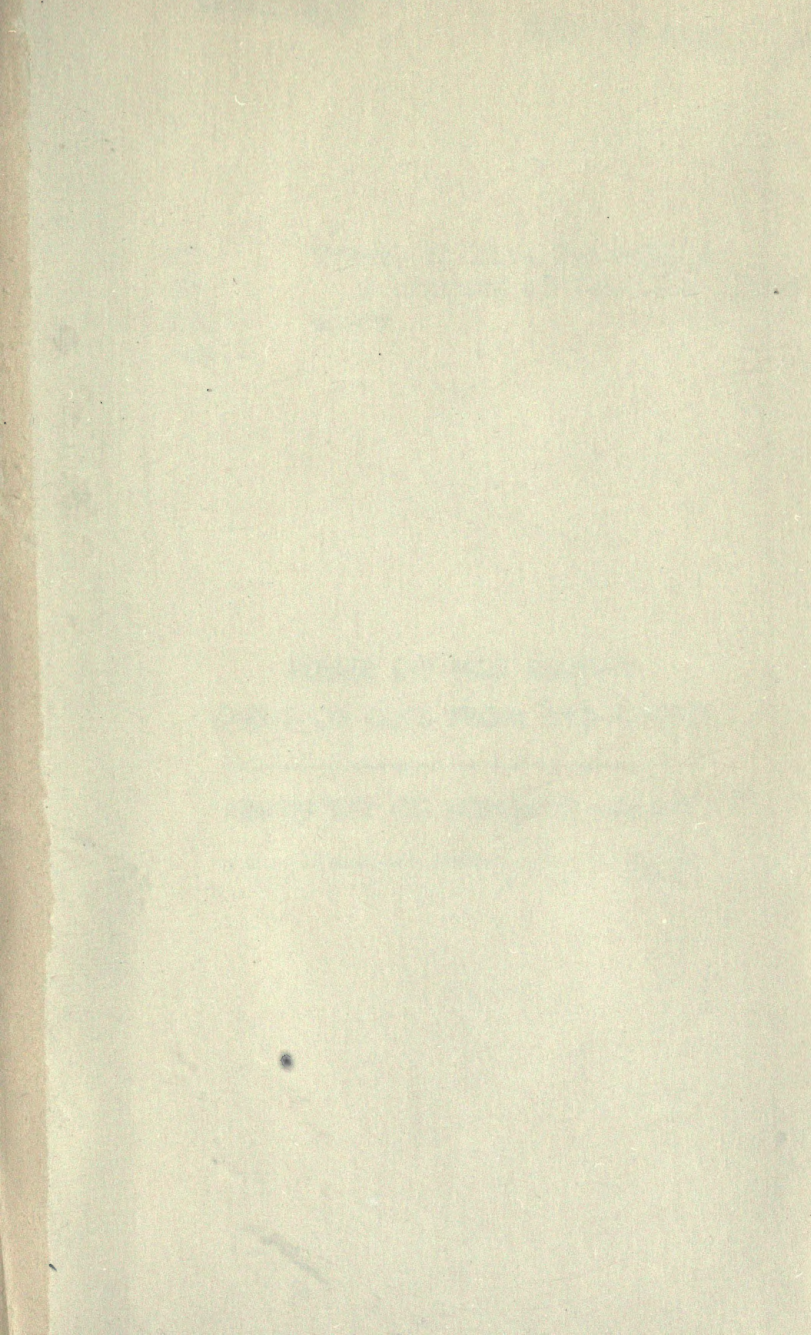
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